

Liberty

March 2001

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Bill Clinton:
Still Lying
After All
These Years

Lights Out!

How environmentalist fantasies and government regulation caused California's power failure.

by Fred Smith

The Last Days of the Welfare State

by Stephen Berry

Abortion and Hypocrisy

by Charles Rebert

Conservatives vs. Progress

by Timothy Sandefur

Also: Kirby Wright relives terror in paradise, Bruce Ramsey visits an island of decency in a sea of Nazi terror, William Merritt wonders whether the Civil War was worth the lives of 600,000 young men . . . plus other articles, reviews, and humor



"O Sweet Name of Liberty." — Cicero

Letters

Money's a Side Dish, Not a Meal

An entrepreneur was once offered a very good contract to produce a product he had the capability to easily produce. Financially, he was in a very precarious situation. Health problems were causing him to rapidly lose the sense he needed greatly in his profession. Yet, he refused the contract and when his friend admonished him to take it, he ended his friendship. Instead of writing another symphony in the style of his first for a good fee, Beethoven continued on the path he had set for himself from the beginning. To write the best music he was capable of writing; even if the monetary rewards might be less. The value he created by doing so lives on to this day.

In his article "Ayn Rand's Strange Economics" (January), Mark Skousen argues that Ayn Rand really did not understand economics because the heroes of her books act, not out of a desire to fulfill the desires of consumers, but rather to fulfill their own. He claims this to be a denial of "a basic tenet of sound economics — the principle of consumer sovereignty."

I don't think that making money is even the greatest driving force to most entrepreneurs. It seems to me that the fulfillment of a creative vision is what drives many, if not most. Certainly, I have run into many for whom making money is the whole ball game, and I agree that by following the principle of "consumer sovereignty" they will probably do more good than harm, but the real achievements come from those who produce the "next great thing" because it's "neat."

A good example of such an entrepreneur is Steve Jobs. Though he is certainly trying to make money, his focus has never been on fulfilling the customer's expectations but rather to make the next great computer. Sometimes he has succeeded and sometimes he has failed. His successes are then copied by

those who are intent on making money by fulfilling the principle of "consumer sovereignty." Skousen is right when he states that "The true spirit of a free society is best summed up in the Christian commandment, 'Love thy neighbor as thyself.'" Though Howard Roark, John Galt, and their creator might not agree with the words, they show agreement through their actions. Like Beethoven, they showed true love for their neighbors by refusing to lower themselves to produce anything less than their best for those neighbors.

Howard Davis
Atlanta, Ga.

Something's Strange

Mark Skousen's article not only misrepresents Rand's writings, but fails even in its misplaced criticism. Skousen claims that Rand denies fundamental economic principles, and he bolsters this claim with several quotations from Rand's novel *The Fountainhead*. But Skousen takes the quotations wholly out of their context. When Roark refuses to work under the arbitrary demands of his clients, he is not rejecting capitalism — he is affirming the fact that he knows more about architecture than they do. Further, Rand makes a point of showing the reader the overwhelmingly positive reactions Roark's clients have to his work. Rand's point is not that consumers should be ignored, but that Roark can give his clients what they didn't know they wanted. In the real world, this is what entrepreneurs, inventors, and artists do everyday — they produce in advance of consumer demand. Sometimes the products take years to generate demand, but the production, the creation of new value, is not something that "denies a basic tenet of sound economics."

But Skousen's article is not about economics. His criticism reaches beyond the economic issues of demand and supply, and addresses the philo-

sophical motivation of producers, creators, inventors, artists, and businessmen. This too was Rand's emphasis; she wrote *The Fountainhead* to illustrate a moral point, not an economic one. And this, ultimately, is what troubles Skousen. Rand argued that the purpose of production, whether economic, artistic, or personal, is selfish. She argued that no act of creation should be governed exclusively by the desires of others. Rand argued for, and defended, egoism.

And it is egoism that Skousen has problems with. The central theme of Skousen's criticism surfaces in the last paragraph of his article. Rand's failing, according to Skousen, is her rejection of the Christian ethics. Skousen criticizes Rand for rejecting the Christian commandment, "Love thy neighbor as thyself," which, he argues, is the true spirit of a free society.

For Rand, however, the true spirit of a free society was "laissez faire." Rand did not believe that freedom makes people beholden to their neighbors. She argued that freedom does not impose upon us any obligation to our neighbors whatsoever — whether financial or romantic. Rand believed that men should direct their efforts to their own benefit, not the benefit of others. In fact, the entire study of economics depends upon only two basic tenets: scarcity and self-interest. A free society, Rand argued, like the free market, requires a strong commitment to self-interest. Adam Smith may have shied away from the moral necessity of self-interest, but Rand did not.

If Skousen had openly challenged Rand's ethics, if he had brought arguments to bear, and if he had presented a case for his position, his article would have been of great interest and of great value. In the end, however, he only musters a quote from Christian scripture. He says that Rand's disagreement with scripture is a great tragedy, but he is wrong. It is the habit of substituting Gospel for reasoned argument that is the tragedy — not for Rand, but for the freedom movement as a whole.

Patrick Stephens
Poughkeepsie, N.Y.

The Artistic Spirit Rides Again

Mark Skousen discusses Roark in business terms, but Rand meant for Roark to be viewed primarily as an artist. This is not to say that artists and

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businessmen have nothing in common. But businessmen are arguably motivated primarily by profit, while artists are motivated by their creative vision more than the simple love of money. In the art world, subordinating one's ideas to money is akin to prostitution. It is in the old world of patronage, rather than the modern world of free enterprise, where such subordination of ideas is appropriate.

This brings me to the other misinterpretation of Rand in Skousen's article: his portrayal of her as being "snob-bish." It is not that the idea of pandering to the common person's taste repulsed her. Rather, if an artist remained true to his vision and created genuinely great art, then the common people (and art buyers) would see this greatness as well. A common person can actually have very good taste when he is presented with something worthy of it.

Brooke Mullins
Norman, Okla.

Just Shut Up!

Just when I finally thought it safe to purchase a copy of *Liberty*, the new January issue in fact, I find *yet another* article about Ayn Rand! Let me state my problem, or rather objection in both a politically and "Objectivistically" correct way: *the bitch is dead!* Let her rest in peace, wherever she may be.

Did my use of the word "bitch" offend you? Well, it would not have offended Ms. Rand, a person whom I admired, respected, and met on several occasions. She was tough and aggressive, and well aware of the fact that the word "bitch" would be on many people's tongues when they had to deal with a liberated woman such as she was.

But I come to bury Queen Ayn, not to praise her! Enough is enough! Ayn Rand was original, thoughtful, and unique, with a seat at the head table at the Great Philosophers Banquet; however, she could not walk on water!

Fred Bluestone
Lauderhill, Fla.

The Myth of Statistics?

J.R. Edward's "The Myth of Corporate Power" (January), sounds like Republicans on steroids. According to *Everybody's Business Almanac*, the 400 top companies employ or support 25%

of the U.S. population. The 1,000 largest companies account for 60% of the GNP with the rest divided among 11 million small businesses. The average large business is 16,500 times larger than the average small business. One percent of the population owns 60% of the corporate equities and 40% of the total wealth of the nation. According to *Business Week*, the top CEOs in 1992, received 157 times as much compensation as the average worker. In 1960, it was only 40 times as much. Corporate power and the concentration of wealth are not myths. They are great dangers to freedom and democracy.

Corporations achieved this power cooperating with the State to create a system of managed competition. No single company has to remain dominant for long because the power elite simply shifts investments and directorships as required. The mercantilists buy politicians and position their men in the upper echelon of government. Look who the next Secretary of the Treasury nominee is: the president of Alcoa!

Governments serve corporations by buying their goods, propping up prices, subsidizing their inefficiencies, protecting monopolies (especially in land), minimizing competition, guaranteeing their credit, covering their losses, absorbing the cost of bankruptcies, limiting their liabilities, and legalizing corporate theft, deception, and violations of rights. Yet free market advocates go out of their way to defend these creatures of the State.

Paul Gagnon
Franconia, Va.

Cover Fire for Merritt

In addition to the passages William E. Merritt cites, ("Second Thoughts," January), the Constitution contains two other strong affirmations of right to the private ownership of arms.

Article I, Section 8, paragraph 11 stipulates that Congress shall have power "To declare War, *grant Letters of Marque and Reprisal*, and make Rules concerning Captures on Land and Water." [italics added] A letter of marque and reprisal conferred permission on private individuals to operate beyond national sovereign jurisdiction for the purpose of conducting reprisals against an enemy power and taking "prizes" (i.e., captured bounty). This permission is founded on the premise

that private individuals would have the means to acquire, equip, and crew the most powerful weapon system known to the 18th century: the warship. No passage of the Constitution otherwise prohibits such ownership. Revised to the 20th century, this provision could logically include the employment of submarine warfare. (It should also be noted that the reference to "captures on land and water" implies the legitimacy of privately-organized armies and marine soldiers.)

Article I, Section 8, paragraph 16 stipulates that Congress shall have power "*To provide for organizing, arming, and disciplining the Militia*, and for governing such Part of them as may be employed in the Service of the United States, reserving to the States respectively, the Appointment of the Officers, and the Authority of training the Militia according to the discipline prescribed by Congress." [italics added] In other words, Congress has a positive responsibility to organize and arm the general militia with such arms as would serve the purpose of repelling invasions, etc. At the very least, this would include any and all arms that can be carried by individuals, or mobilized and operated by squads. (In addition to muskets, the militiamen at Lexington were in possession of fieldpieces.) In modern terms, this would extend to shoulder-fired anti-tank and anti-aircraft weapons, crew-served machine guns and cannon, tanks and other armored vehicles, and (possibly) attack helicopters. Further, the state governments have the responsibility to *train* militia so equipped, according to the regimen established by Congress.

Alas, if only Congress and the states would step up to their constitutional obligations!

Michael J. Dunn
Auburn, Wash.

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We Aim to Please

William E. Merritt's thoughts on the Second Amendment are interesting and thought-provoking. I'm not sure about the difference between an individual right and a group right in this case. The U.S. code states that all able-bodied males of age 17 (or 18?) and older are members of the militia. This would seem to make the Second Amendment an individual right. But by Merritt's theory, my buddy and I can set up our own group and parade around with assorted arms.

I have long held the notion that militiamen, however defined, should be able to have all the arms that government troops have. I disagree with the West Virginia Supreme Court that certain arms, such as pistols, bowie knives, brass knuckles, etc., are not protected by the Second Amendment. This is the same mistake that the U.S. Supreme Court made in the *Miller* case, when they decided that sawed-off shotguns had no military use, and were therefore not protected by the Second Amendment. The military uses the Claymore mine, which is essentially a zero-barrel shotgun. Every substance on earth has potential for military use, including sticks, rocks, poison gas, teeth, fingernails, etc.

Merritt makes an excellent point about the difficulties that changes in the meaning of language often cause. This is true not only for the "regulated" in the Second Amendment, but also for the same word in the interstate commerce clause. The Founding Fathers would be distressed to find that the interstate commerce clause has been perverted to mean almost total control of interstate (and even much intrastate) commerce, when what they really meant was that states could not erect tariff barriers at their borders.

L. Hatzilambrou
Scottsdale, Ariz.

Betcha Didn't Learn That in Law School

Merritt's article is well-written and covers all the bases, but makes the same error as do most commentaries on the Bill of Rights. It assumes the Bill of Rights is the source of our rights, and thus protects them:

... what the Second Amendment protects is 'the right of the people to keep and bear arms.' [and] ... they want to

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believe the Constitution gives them that right.

The Preamble to the Bill of Rights referred to them as "further declaratory and restrictive clauses." And we should remember that all ten amendments were passed at the same time. They begin with "Congress shall make no law," and ended with "powers not delegated . . . are reserved." In other words, rights were off-limits to their just-created federal government. They weren't deposited there for protection and safekeeping.

Just 27 years later, Section 17 of the Connecticut Constitution of 1818 read:

Every citizen has a right to bear arms in defense of himself and the state.

Could the right be stated more simply? That was just nine years after Thomas Jefferson's second term as president expired. Yet neither he nor anyone else complained of Connecticut's infringement on federal power.

The Preamble to Connecticut's 1818 Constitution read in part:

The people of Connecticut acknowledging with gratitude, the good providence of God, in having permitted them to enjoy a free government, do, in order more effectually to define, secure, and perpetuate the liberties, rights and privileges which they have derived from their ancestors . . .

That clearly states the people of Connecticut derived their "liberties, rights and priviledges . . . from their ancestors." No mention is made of the Bill of Rights — just 27 years earlier — or even the federal government, created, by them, just 29 years earlier.

Taken together, that means the Second Amendment is not the origin of the right "to keep and bear arms"; nor is it a license for citizens to determine what their personal gun rights are. It is a "restrictive" clause which applies exclusively to the federal government.

Thus, citing the Second Amendment as authority for the right is misplaced, and focusing on the word "people" as qualifying the right to groups is silly. State constitutions secure the right, and state laws enacted pursuant thereto define the extent of the right.

Texas law allows one to bear arms in his car. New York law does not. That isn't two different interpretations of the Second Amendment. It is two different bodies of law. Two different

approaches to the right, from two sovereign states.

James Harrold
Fayetteville, Ark.

Senility Screening

Perhaps being tongue-in-cheek, R.W. Bradford calls for test questions to be added to ballots to disqualify the "demented and moronic" from voting (*Reflections*, January). This was, of course, in the wake of the debacle on election day in Palm Beach County, Fla., when a number of mostly elderly voters couldn't figure out a relatively simple "butterfly" ballot.

Actually, in his comment that "we've never disqualified anyone for being too old to vote," he touches upon an issue that will assume increasing importance in coming decades as the elderly constitute an increasing share of the U.S. population. Shouldn't there be an age past which a person would automatically no longer be able to vote, sign contracts, make wills, convey property, etc.?

Many are simply no longer able to choose a candidate for an elective office wisely and with consideration of the public good. As a group, seniors get more self-centered and childish as they age. They vote on the same basis as a 6-year-old would: "Who's going to increase my allowance, and increase it the most?" We don't let young children vote for that very reason — or else we'd have even larger Social Security checks going to them too. An old person with the mental understanding of a 6-year-old shouldn't be able to vote either.

Old people are already dependent on Social Security, Medicare, and Medicaid. Once these benefits start, they almost never stop. Most of today's older retirees got back what they paid into these programs within two years or so of drawing their first checks; everything after that is welfare. We decided for better or for worse a few years ago that children are no longer worthy of our public assistance. That's largely because they can't vote. So is it right that the biggest group of welfare recipients by age can vote?

Many elderly are simply too gullible and senile to handle their own affairs properly. Despite repeated warnings about hucksters and scam artists who prey especially on them, they still fall for phony sweepstakes, shady invest-

ments, and major repair scams. Quite a few keep large sums of cash at home because they haven't trusted banks since the Great Depression, yet they'll give that money to the first home repair huckster who comes along and claims they need \$100,000 worth of work on a \$50,000 house. If seniors can't be trusted with their own resources, why should they be able to choose someone with access to ours?

The simple solution, a law specifying a maximum age for voting, plainly will never fly in today's political climate. Tomorrow's may be another matter. But another solution could be implemented today with few or no changes to existing law. After a person has recouped the money he or she has paid into Social Security and Medicare — or received any money at all from Medicaid to pay medical or nursing home bills — he or she could be declared a ward of the state, and thereby ineligible to vote, unless he or she chooses to opt out of receiving future benefits.

Edwin Krampitz Jr.
Drewryville, Va.

Let's Agree to . . . Agree

Dom Armentano's reply to me (February) is mystifying. In my review of Raimondo's book on Rothbard (December), I had criticized Rothbard's distinctive methodological views, especially his rejection of whole disciplines (such as statistics) and whole areas of economics (such as econometrics) on aprioristic philosophical grounds. Professor Armentano zealously sprang to Rothbard's defense (January), or so I had thought. Now it appears that Armentano rejects Rothbard's peculiar methodological position, just as I do.

Armentano denies that he holds that "only the aprioristic method can generate real contributions in economics, where or where [sic.] did I ever say that?" But Rothbard, famously and lucidly, did say that his "aprioristic method" is the only legitimate way to generate economic theory, explicitly ruling out all mathematical or empirical approaches. Rothbard's was the position I was controverting. Why didn't Dom Armentano save us all this trouble by saying at the beginning that he warmly applauded my strictures on Rothbard, instead of leaving the

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Reflections

Springtime for Dubya — As the inauguration approaches, we're at that giddy time when all things seem possible. It's like spring training in baseball. Your team may have finished last in the previous season, but it hasn't lost any games yet this year, and that new kid playing shortstop, well, if his throwing arm gets to be a little more accurate and he can hit consistently like he did in that game where he had a home run, a double and three RBIs, and if a couple other prospects come through in a big way, and if that has-been pitcher signed at the last minute has a season like he had in 1992, and . . . we could go all the way to the Series.

President George W. Bush hasn't done anything bad as president yet. He's appointed a former libertarian activist to be Secretary of the Interior and three Reason Foundation policy wonks to various advisory boards. And he seems to have had the sort of life experience that would leave him more sensible than his recent predecessors, and maybe he'll actually cut taxes, reduce regulation, and . . .

Of course, deep in your heart, you know that the shortstop will be back in the minors by May, that the washed-up pitcher you signed will be given his unconditional release in June, and if you're lucky, your team will almost play .500 ball this year.

And you also know that all politicians are scoundrels. By May, Bush the Younger will likely be sending American bombers and troops somewhere they don't belong, raising taxes, promulgating new regulations . . .

But, hey. It's spring. We have four long years to suffer through the perniciousness of George W. Bush. Let's enjoy our season of hope while it lasts. — R. W. Bradford

Power failure — Well, we just had our first rotating blackout here in the heart of Silicon Valley. Ain't central planning masquerading as the free market great? Now I know what it's like to live in Russia. I hope Sacramento doesn't "deregulate" meat and potatoes next. —Paul Rako

"Look Mom, I voted!" — The actual experience of voting underscores the infantilization of American politics and of American society at large. Why do they have to give you a little "I Voted!" sticker? Riding back from the polling station on the Washington, D.C. Metro, my fellow voters looked like a pack of overgrown children returning from the dentist: "Jimmie was such a good boy! He hardly squirmed

at all, and he didn't have any cavities!" No wonder no one seems embarrassed to argue that people too stupid to cast a ballot properly should have their vote count anyway.

— Gene Healy

Welfare queens — In Florida, a local power plant has been ordered, at considerable expense, to continue dumping warm water into the St. Johns River long after it stopped serving its purposes because some manatees had discovered the warm water and were using it to fight off the cold snap. Finally, sea cows on welfare! — John Haywood

Differently-abled accessible — I've long speculated that the Democratic Party relies on mass stupidity to remain in power, but with the recent election, they have verified it. The bulk of the argument over disputed ballots was that the ballots filled out incorrectly were cast by stupid

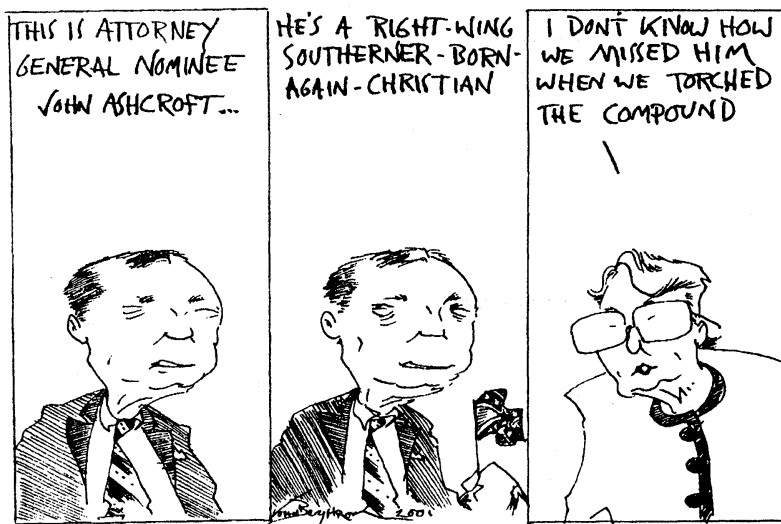
people who couldn't figure out the ballot, and would have undoubtedly voted for Al Gore.

Our founders were well aware of the danger of submitting to the will of the masses; hence, our government is a Republic rather than a Democracy. In fact, some of the original framers only wanted to give property owners the right to vote, assuming that anyone with half a

brain can own property in a free nation, and anyone with less than half a brain shouldn't vote.

I have always been a proponent of screening stupidity from the polling booth, and commend Florida for their "confusing" ballots. If I were head of the elections board, I would propose a ballot more like the following: "George Bush, Al Gore, and Harry Browne are on separate trains headed for Washington DC at 50 mph . . ." — Tim Slagle

A very high hurdle — There's no more important skill for a smart manager than to appoint good people, and Bush has appointed an impressive line-up. I am an advocate of more good women in government and couldn't have been happier with his choices — Condoleezza Rice, Christie Whitman, Linda Chavez, and Mary Matalin. Unfortunately, Chavez has gone down. She was right in her withdrawal speech — she would have made a good Labor Secretary bringing a fresh approach to affirmative action, sexual



harassment law, and others.

The nanny problem has become like a form of sexual profiling for career women. Chavez saying in her withdrawal speech that she is no saint or Mother Teresa reminded me of the fact that even Mother Teresa was prevented from giving aid to the homeless by government red tape in New York City a few years ago. When Mother Teresa tried to redo an abandoned warehouse into a homeless shelter, she ran into so many regulations, including the necessity of installing an elevator (which would have cost a half-million dollars), that she abandoned the venture. There are so many laws and regulations in the U.S., it's becoming nearly impossible to avoid being a criminal of some sort. We have not only criminalized nearly everyone, but are overly punitive in enforcing the laws. The gotcha game and the politics of personal destruction is not a good way to run a government or a civil nation. Why must someone have to be better than Mother Teresa to become a cabinet official?

— Sarah McCarthy

Is that a monkey in your pocket or are you just glad to see me?

— The *Guardian* reports that youth gangs in Paris suburbs, unable to buy guns, are importing Barbary monkeys from Northern Africa and using them as weapons. Their favored method of attack is to hurl themselves at people's heads and to bite with their sharp teeth. The monkeys are sold without permits, waiting periods, or background checks.

— Tim Slagle

Who'da thunk that? — The government has just finished a series of tests to determine which automobiles are most likely to roll over. At the top of the list were SUVs like the Blazer. At the bottom was the Honda Accord 4-door. But underneath all the scientific jargon of the star rating system was one amazing fact: Cars with a *higher* center of gravity have a *greater* tendency to roll over.

— Eric Raetz

How do you say "hypocrisy" in Hebrew?

— On Jan. 3rd's "Nightline," all the talking heads agreed that it would be unreasonable to ask Israel to allow all Palestinian refugees to return, since such an influx would obviously imperil Israel's status as a Jewish nation. Am I confusing my countries, or was it this same "Jewish nation" that recalled its ambassador from Austria when the locals voted the anti-immigration Jorge Haider into office?

— Barry Loberfeld

Sue the bastards! — Michael McDermott broke into Human Resources Department of Edgewater Technology and killed seven employees. Police investigating the case found that the IRS was about to garnish the majority

of his paycheck, leaving him \$500 a month to live off.

How can anyone reasonably expect a person to live in the Boston area for \$500 a month? Welfare recipients get more than that in food stamps. Now ammo-phobes are using the incident as another opportunity to start an assault against legal gun owners and manufacturers. I think the relatives of the victims should file a class-action suit against the IRS. It is certainly as responsible for these deaths as any gun manufacturer is.

— Tim Slagle

It depends on whether your definition of "work" works

— In the wake of the Linda Chavez affair, the *New York Times* editorialized that Chavez's conduct "cast doubt on [her] ability to oversee the core function of the Labor Department, which is to define what work is and how it should be compensated." The era of Big Government is over, eh?

— Sheldon Richman

Job 1 — On January 8, I saw Richard Wagoner, G.M.'s CEO, interviewed on Fox News. Mr. Wagoner was asked, among other things, whether he was happy that Bush, rather than Gore, would soon be occupying the White House.

Now, bear in mind that Detroit automobile executives hate Al Gore worse than Satan. Their hatred is a natural result of his well-advertised antipathy to the internal combustion engine, which happens to be the basis of their livelihood. But what did Mr. Wagoner say when he was asked about this momentous issue? Did he say that he would be happier to have as president someone who was not an enemy of his industry? Did he even say that he favored President-elect Bush and expected nothing but the best from his administration?

No, of course he didn't. He mumbled something about how the eight years of the Clinton-Gore administration hadn't been bad for the auto industry after all, and he mumbled something else about how he thought that the promised programs of the incoming administration were likely to be consistent with GM's desire for the continuation of a vibrant economy.

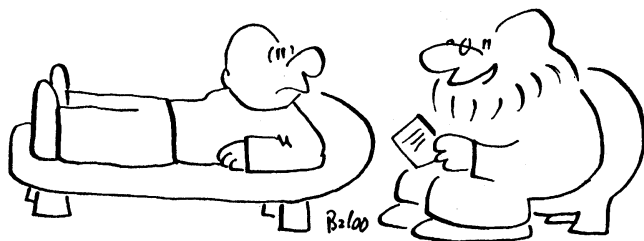
That's what he said, I think.

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Perhaps Mr. Wagoner was panicked by the thought that if he allowed himself to take an overtly political position, well, who knows what might happen? Maybe some lifelong Democrat would vent his anger at the next stockholders' meeting. Maybe the Friends of the Earth would issue a press release. Maybe . . . well, who *knows* what might happen? So, rather than have anything happen, Mr. Wagoner simply suggests to the nation that the Clinton-Gore administration has been just fine, thank you.

This is an approach guaranteed to keep business out of the political fray, thus leaving it entirely to the enemies of business. And this is an approach that the movers and shakers, savants and whiz kids, titans of industry and moguls of merchandise use so continuously that no one any longer expects anything else from them. Which introduces the interesting question:

What do these people think their *job* is? Is it just to futz around with accountants and ad agents, get their assistants



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End the Drug War or Forget About Freedom — Alan Bock journeys to the heart of darkness in America's failed effort at drug prohibition. The casualties of the war, says Bock, are a lot of harmless people and your civil rights. (audio: A419; video: V419)

Why the Great Depression Lasted So Long — Robert Higgs explains how government, not free markets, caused the Great Depression; how the New Deal prolonged

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to write the occasional think piece for some metropolitan daily, and go on television from time to time and make nice little comments about everyone? Or is it to help preserve the capitalist system against wackos like Al Gore?

The first responsibility of business leaders, said Isabel Paterson, is to maintain the system that makes their business possible. That's what they're paid for, and very few of them are underpaid.

— Stephen Cox

The politics of pretext — The borking of Linda Chavez, accomplished so neatly over two days, was a move right out of Paul Weaver's 1994 book, *News and the Culture of Lying*. He used the example of Sen. John Tower, nominated by Bush the Elder as Secretary of Defense and rejected by the Senate.

That the vote was 53–47, all Democrats against and all Republicans for, would suggest the vote was political. More than suggest. But the argument around Tower was whether he drank too much. This, wrote Weaver, was a charade. Everybody in Washington knew about Tower's drinking. The Democrats were against Tower "for reasons of politics and ideology." But they couldn't win an argument on that. They could win an argument on drinking, because the Republicans couldn't come out and say what they really thought, which was, "Yeah, he drinks a lot, but he can handle it and it doesn't matter." The result, noted Weaver, was that "Each side was fighting over an issue it didn't care about (drinking) and pretending not to care about issues it cared a lot about (defense spending and political advantage)."

In a truncated way, that's what happened with Chavez, who was jettisoned on the pretext that she had taken an illegal alien into her home for more than a year. Chavez had given a Guatemalan woman shelter, and the woman had helped around the house. Chavez had given her some spending money. Was the woman an employee? Chavez denied it; the Guatemalan woman also denied it. This was not employment; it was Christian charity. Compassionate conservatism. The left winked and smirked and said, "Yeah, sure. We know."

But they didn't know. Nor did they particularly care. Their interest was a story that they could tell about Linda Chavez, because Chavez was against the minimum wage, racial preferences, and a number of other things they believe in and make a living from. They could not derail her by talking about those things, but they could derail her by talking about a woman from Guatemala — because the Republicans were *not* willing to come out and say, "Maybe she did break one of your labor laws, but we don't care about that."

It would be refreshing if someone came out and said that. But they won't.

— Bruce Ramsey

Two cheers for apathy — During the recent uncertainty over the outcome of the presidential election, few Americans came close to panic and no blood was shed. Some commentators saw it as a tribute to our system and the people's faith in it. *New Republic* commentator John Judis said it was because, despite surface polarization, not much was at stake in the election, both candidates having cast themselves as consensus centrists.

It might also have been, however, a manifestation of the

growing irrelevance of national politics in our daily lives. Washington is no longer where the action is, and it no longer attracts as many top-drawer people with ambitious, idealistic agendas as once it did. Communism dominated much of the century past, but it has died and with it much of the reason for Americans to be intimately concerned with what happens in the national capital. Add the growth of technology that has led to a restructured and revitalized private sector, and national government seems almost pathetic in its marginality, a source of entertainment and one-liners for late-night comedians rather than a source of inspiration or active trepidation.

This is hardly the disaster some would see, but more like a fulfillment of the promise of American life. In 1780, John Adams wrote a famous letter to his wife Abigail: "I must study politics and war, that my sons may have the liberty to study mathematics and philosophy in order to give their children a right to study painting, poetry, music." Surely the next millennium will see resurgences of politicization, wars, conflicts, bloodshed, and schemes by ambitious rulers to put people under subjection. Some of us will still have to study politics and war to be vigilant about threats to liberty. But the new century is beginning in a spirit of relative indifference that makes politics more marginal in our lives than it has been. That's not a bad start.

— Alan Bock

Legitimacy, who needs it? — People who are worried about the "legitimacy" of President Bush should (first) take a pill and (second) reflect on the history of Mirabeau B. Lamar.

"Who?"

I hope you don't really need to ask that question. But in case you do, I'll remind you that Mirabeau B. Lamar (B for Buonaparte) was elected President of the Republic of Texas in 1838. And here was a guy with a serious legitimacy problem. Before the voters — a small minority of the population of Texas — went to the polls, Lamar's two opponents had both died. One shot himself, and the other drowned himself in Galveston Bay. Under these circumstances, who could know whether Lamar had the support of the people?

To make matters worse, Sam Houston, Lamar's predecessor and contemptuous enemy, showed up at the inauguration to make a few remarks. He spoke for three hours, defending his own program and criticizing Lamar's. Lamar was too angry to deliver his own address, so his secretary had to do it for him. Students of presidential imagery will be interested to know that Lamar was also lacking in the stature department: he was very short, and Houston was very tall.

But none of this dismayed Mirabeau B. Lamar. He immediately presented a budget calling for almost three times the expenditures of the previous year, raised the president's salary by more than one thousand percent, and started an Indian war. Later he tried to start a system of public schools, for which he is known as "the Father of Texas Education" (such as it is). He established a new capital at Austin and mounted the (disastrous) Santa Fe Expedition, undertaken against the opposition of Congress and with a personally ordered printing of new currency, to extend Texan territory to the Pacific Ocean.

You might not like the policies of Mirabeau B. Lamar, but you've got to admit that the legitimacy issue never stood in

his way. Also, you gotta love his name.

— Stephen Cox

Sic transit gloria mendacum — In his continuing effort to de-legitimize the election of his successor, Bill Clinton remarked at the swearing in of Senator Maria Cantwell of Washington, who won her seat after a recount, that if the recount of the presidential vote in Florida had been allowed to continue as had the senatorial recount in Washington, Al Gore might be president today.

As usual, he couldn't have been more wrong.

Washington state law allows a single machine recount of ballots, after which the results are final. Florida law allows the same. A machine recount of ballots was conducted in Florida, and George W. Bush won. All the controversy in Florida was about whether and how to conduct a selective hand-recount of certain ballots, believed to be heavily Democratic in intention, that had already been counted twice by machines.

One is tempted to say something like "Bill Clinton began his campaign as a liar, he lied habitually throughout his tenure in office, and he finished his presidency as a liar." But that would be to misread Clinton. To be a liar, one has to be able to distinguish between truth and falsehood. What matters for Clinton is not truth or falsity. It is what gets him what he wants, which is more power, more prestige, more sex, and more money. His very successful career as a politician has been based on his ability to speak without the slightest concern for the truth or falsity of what he says.

I am sure it never even occurred to the president that what he said comparing the Cantwell and Bush victories was false. It got him favorable publicity on the evening news. And that's all that mattered.

— R. W. Bradford

What I learned at the millennial election — I'm not nearly as tough as I'd thought. I had my cool libertarian detachment, my smug conviction that there's not "a dime's worth of difference" between the two parties. But judging by my emotional state on the night and morning of Nov. 7th and 8th and the days that followed, that detachment was easily shattered. I found that I cared very much who won the election. I have to live in this country for another 50 years if I'm lucky, and I don't want to spend the last 20 crouching in my concrete bunker and taking potshots at the various vandals and strongmen who wander the post-apocalyptic wasteland in search of loot. I'd prefer a leisurely and graceful collapse of Western civilization rather than the cataclysm that's sure to ensue if we continue to be governed by power-mad fiends.

In fact, there is at least a dime's worth of difference

between the Dems and the Republicans. As Joseph Stromberg observed, the Republicans have a shred of decency "and it is a great handicap to them." As they did with impeachment, they brought a croquet mallet to a gunfight, underestimating the ruthlessness of their adversaries. The Republicans' modicum of decency means they're likely to abuse executive authority less than the Democrats. It also explains why they're likely to lose most of these power struggles in the long run.

— Gene Healy

War is the extension of domestic policy by other means

— When Bill Clinton assumed office, some hoped that as a former protester against the undeclared war in Vietnam, he might rein in the modern tendency of the Imperial Presidency to involve U.S. military forces overseas without bothering to consult Congress, let alone ask it to declare war.

But as president, Clinton expanded on the tradition of unjustified military intervention. Perhaps the most significant foreign-policy legacy of the Clinton era will be the demolition of even the pretense that the United States involves itself in wars only to deter aggression or as a defensive move.

Before Clinton, U.S. presidents were careful to cast U.S. military action as defensive in nature. Sometimes the protestations were shaky, as with the Tonkin Gulf Resolution that, on closer examination, turned out to be a pretext rather than a response to an actual attack. But at least presidents made the effort to appear to be responding to aggression rather than ini-

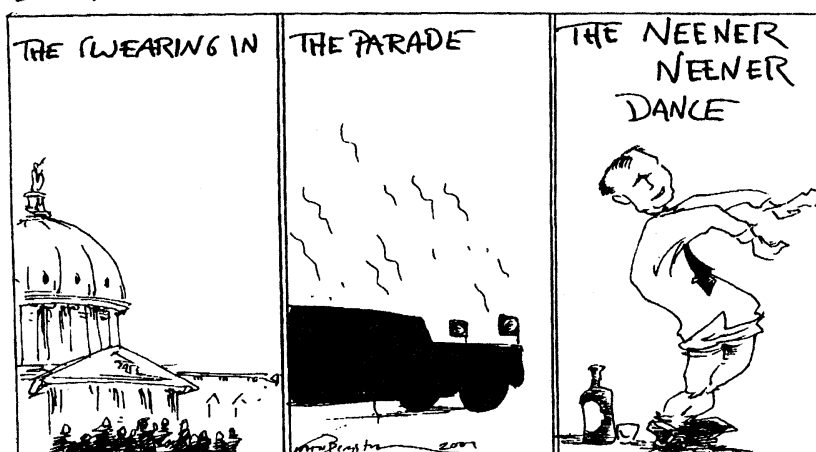
tiating it.

President Clinton abandoned virtually all pretense of a defensive posture; indeed, some of his foreign attacks seemed to be cynical "wag the dog" gestures designed to deflect attention from domestic or personal embarrassments.

The missile attacks on a pharmaceutical factory in Sudan and on targets in Afghanistan in August 1998, he claimed, were linked to Saudi terrorist Osama bin Laden, who was suspected of orchestrating bombings of U.S. embassies. It turned out the pharmaceutical factory was not a chemical-weapons facility, and that Clinton knew this and ordered the attack anyway. Monica Lewinsky testified before a grand jury that day.

All pretense of defensiveness was scuttled with the December 1998 missile attacks on Iraq. As it became obvious that the House was going to go through with impeachment, the president seized on the fact that Saddam Hussein had kicked UN weapons inspectors out of Iraq two months earlier to launch "Operation Desert Fox," several days of airstrikes against Iraq. In November, Clinton had UN support

BUSH INAUGURAL EVENTS



for such strikes, but by December he had none. He did it anyway.

The key factor is that although Saddam was undoubtedly intransigent with UN inspectors, there was no evidence that he had attacked another country or had any short-term intention of doing so. The airstrikes amounted to naked aggression against a country that, while undoubtedly led by a murderous tyrant, had not invaded or threatened its neighbors.

The 1999 air war against Kosovo and Serbia followed the same pattern. Serbian leader Slobodan Milosevic is a villain, but when Clinton pushed NATO to launch an air war against him, he had not invaded or threatened to invade any foreign country. He was putting down a rebellion in Kosovo rather brutally (though not as brutally as NATO propaganda insisted), but Kosovo was recognized by every member of the vaunted "international community" as a province of Yugoslavia. That made the NATO war against Serbia a war of aggression. It was a war without declaration, by now the custom.

President Clinton's interpretation of executive war-making authority was positively Nixonian in its audacity. He also waged war without congressional approval in Haiti and Bosnia. He insisted that the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty and the Kyoto global warming treaty were in effect, although the Senate declined to ratify either.

Will the next administration be more restrained in making war? Perhaps. Will Congress take back its constitutional power to have the final word when it comes to making war? Ha!

— Alan Bock

The only good cop is a non-cop — I moved to Port Townsend, Wash. about four months ago, and in the time I've been here, I haven't seen any evidence of a single crime. No shoplifting, vandalism, public drunkenness, double parking; nothing. It's true, I have heard rumors about some of the locals keeping hothouses that don't exactly grow petunias. I once saw three police cars parked outside of a house, and the thought occurred to me that they might be there to make an arrest for some crime. But the cops might just as easily have been there to trap a raccoon that had burrowed into the basement and was threatening the cats. The closest thing to a crime here occurs when local juvenile delinquents get together and pour Tide laundry detergent into the Haller Fountain on Washington Street.

Port Townsend has a lot of policemen for a town its size, but I don't think that's why it has so little crime. I suspect that we have so little crime because Port Townsendites are generally friendly, decent, and well-armed. Isn't that the description of the good cop? Of course, my idea of a good cop would be one who has no authority beyond interceding in emergencies and executing arrest warrants. I doubt any civilian here has ever committed entrapment, forged evidence to obtain a warrant, or even cared that the nice couple next door keeps those lights on in their basement all day and night. And, of course, the typical Port Townsendite doesn't depend on tax dollars to make a living. In Port Townsend, everyone is a cop when you need help, but only the police are when you don't.

Next time someone in your town suggests raising taxes to hire more cops, why not suggest dismantling the police force

and sponsoring a little cultural exchange instead?

— Elizabeth Merritt

Rethinking Rand — I may have to re-evaluate Ayn Rand. Though I enjoyed *We the Living*, written when Rand's philosophy was too unformed to allow her to beat the reader over the head with it, I found her other novels shrill and heavy-handed. *Atlas Shrugged* struck me as the libertarian equivalent of socialist realism: courageous, square-jawed capitalists battling parasitic, degenerate villains, whose inner corruption is so complete, it's obvious from their outward appearances — like they're walking Pictures of Dorian Gray. I still find her protagonists overdone. But I'm starting to think she got her villains right. I wonder: if Rand had written a novel with villains as physically and morally repellent as Al Gore, Chuck Schumer, and Hillary Clinton, would I have sneered at her for her lack of subtlety? I hate these people more than is entirely healthy for me. I need another hobby.

— Gene Healy

The sea of life — I had lived in Southern California for 28 years before I visited the largest feature of its landscape, the only feature that schoolchildren on Mars are able to see with their hundred-dollar telescopes.

I refer, of course, to the Salton Sea, a body of water 34 miles long and 14 miles wide, a hundred miles east of San Diego. The Sea occupies what was, until 1905, the lowest point on the North American continent. It was a desert, somewhat like Death Valley, but without the charm. Then an accident took place. There was a channel drawing water from the Colorado River to irrigate some adjacent country, and the river rose and rushed through the channel and into the desert, creating a permanent sea.

It's still there, ten percent saltier than the ocean, and growing saltier; but showing no sign of going away, and still capable of supporting millions of fish and animals that live on fish. You can see it from the mountains, 40 miles away, lying like a turquoise mirage against the Chocolate Mountains. It has been said that the Sea looks better the farther you get from it, but I didn't find the saying true.

On my recent hundred-mile drive around the great Sea, I saw herds of enormous pelicans gliding the surface like 747s, miraculously able to fly; solemn groves of palm trees, dripping with dates; and the silent oasis of the San Andreas fault, alive with coyotes and rattlesnakes and tiny fish in hidden jungle pools. I drove out on the desert along elegantly curving concrete streets, built to welcome the big real estate boom that never came, in towns now empty except for a handful of pink retirement ranchos hugging the shore.

On the east side of the Sea, I visited a trailer park where endless reiterations of Santa Claus and his reindeer mocked the desert sun and the Marine Corps flag flew proudly above a remarkable collection of garden gnomes. A few miles outside of Niland, I visited Slab City, an abandoned Marine base that is the home, each winter, of a spontaneously operating community of trailer nomads of every race and class, a community that has successfully resisted all attempts of government to get it off the property.

At the entrance of Slab City, I enjoyed a conversation with the creator of Salvation Mountain, an outcropping of rocks that he has covered with biblical slogans and pictures.

"I came here for a week or so," he said, "and I'm still here, 16 years later." "Welcome!" he shouted up to me, when he found me climbing on his rocks. "Make yourself at home!" After I'd finished wandering around the site, he searched through his Bible-decorated truck and unearthed copies of books published in foreign countries, featuring pictures of his vernacular art. He told me how many thousands of gallons of paint he had used on his project — "all donated!" When I asked him what church he attended, he said that he didn't object to any of them, but he didn't attend any of them, either. He suggested that he might be close enough to a place of worship, just working along where he did. "Maybe now you'll want to take your donation back," he added. So I got to say, "It's all one church," and he was happy to agree.

America! Go to the Salton Sea, and you will find America.

When I left the great Sea, night was coming fast, and the absurd electric lights of Christmas could be seen far off across the desert, each tiny parallelogram representing someone's house, someone's claim to a part in that immensity. What would they have said, I wondered, any environmentalists who might have been asked to comment 95 years ago, when the Salton Sea and all its amazing life were born? Stop it, they would have said. But it hasn't stopped.

— Stephen Cox

A game for two — If you're a libertarian who owns at least one Confederate flag and thinks Abraham Lincoln was a cruel despot, watch out for Timothy Sandefur: he fights dirty. In his latest paean to Harry Jaffa, "Jefferson, Lincoln, and Bork," (*Liberty*, January 2001) Sandefur takes another swipe at libertarian supporters of the Confederacy. Not content to tar us with racial insensitivity and moral blindness, Sandefur pulls out the old *reductio ad hitlerum*. He quotes Adolf himself on the Civil War: "The beginnings of a great new social order based on slavery and inequality were destroyed by that war, and with them also the embryo of a future truly great America." Sandefur solemnly warns that "libertarians should read Jaffa's critique before endorsing such shameful principles." Catch that logic? Hitler = Southern sympathizer; paleolibertarians = Southern sympathizers; thus, paleolibertarians = Hitler sympathizers (or dangerously close). A nice trick.

Of course, Hitler, who destroyed German federalism, didn't admire the Confederacy for the same reasons many libertarians do. Friends of Liberty like the late Murray Rothbard, Walter Williams, and Ralph Raico, have praised the Confederacy because of its decentralized governmental structure, allegiance to the doctrine of enumerated powers, and endorsement of the principle of secession. Hitler admired the Old South for its dedication to slavery and white supremacy, two principles that libertarians abhor. But hey, that's no reason to squander a good opportunity to suggest that your ideological opponents are closet Nazis.

Well, two can play at that game. Libertarian centrists like Mr. Sandefur are, of course, great admirers of Lincoln. Well so was Karl Marx! Marx praised Lincoln, that "single-minded son of the working class," who had, by waging war against the South, ushered in a "world-transforming revolutionary moment" that would bring "a new era of ascendancy for the working class." You know what that means? You Lincolnian libertarians are a bunch of closet pinkos! Ha!

How do you like them apples?

Now if you'll excuse me, I need to go practice my goose-step.
— Gene Healy

The politics of predators vs. prey — The election is finally over, but the Second American Civil War is still heating up! The razor-thin margin of victory for Bush does not reflect a lack of difference between the two presidential candidates, as some have claimed, but a nation sharply divided between two different sets of values. It boils down to taxpayers versus tax-money takers.

The basis for this war between two segments of society, roughly equal in number, is that there is virtually unlimited potential for government to tax and redistribute income, and there is little to restrain anyone from demanding more and more benefits at the expense of those who pay. This is obviously an unstable and morally hazardous situation. The reason that direct taxes were not authorized in the original Constitution, and why an amendment was needed to institute them, was that the Founders were convinced that direct taxes would give the federal government too much power. How right they were: note that under current American law, absolutely nobody has an entitlement to a penny of his or her own earnings, while there are numerous entitlements to other people's money.

Equality is often used as a moral basis for government to redistribute income. Whether people have a right to the fruits of other people's labor, simply by virtue of having been born, is a question of value. However, whether equality can actually be achieved through government manipulation is an economic question that can be answered without resorting to value judgements.

The faster technology changes, the less likely that there can be equality in the distribution of its benefits. That's because the faster changes take place, the farther the system of constantly changing human choices is from the equilibrium that would be required for equality to exist. Equality requires stasis: an example of perfect equality is death.

The faster technology changes, the faster products of advanced technology become available to all, including those less well-off. Today's \$769 personal computer can run

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circles around the personal computer that cost \$3,000 a decade ago.

It comes down to this: you can have a dynamic economy with lots of opportunities and no guarantee of equal outcomes, or you can have a static economy within which people jockey politically for equality. Each of these alternatives are desirable to about half the American population.

Such a 50-50 split is predicted by game theory (Buchanan, "Politics, Policy, and the Pigovian Margins" in *The Collected Works of James M. Buchanan: Vol. I*, 1999, p. 64-65; Von Neumann and Morgenstern, *Theory of Games and Economic Behavior*, 1953, p. 264). Currently, deviations from an even split are probably the product of credibility differences between the candidates. After Bush Sr. moved his lips on taxes, his base no longer supported him, and Bob Dole was exactly what Newt Gingrich called him — "the tax collector for the welfare state."

Clinton, despite being an exceptionally good liar and being willing to use any means to achieve his ends, remained a credible source of government goodies for his constituencies. In the 2000 election, the credibility of the two candidates appeared to be about equal to their respective constituencies; hence, the almost perfect 50-50 voter split predicted by game theory.

It is easier to follow this argument if you consider, as an analogy, the relationship between populations of predator and prey. Increasing numbers of prey allow for increasing numbers of predators. If predators increase in numbers too rapidly in response to the increased prey, though, the ratio of predators to prey becomes too great and the prey are depleted, followed by a predator's dying-off. Until recently, one of the big problems in mathematical models of predator-prey ecology was that they predicted that predators would completely consume most, if not all, prey and then starve. Of course, this rarely happens in nature. The flaw was that they ignored differences in the spatial distributions of predators versus prey. The ability of prey to move away from high-predation areas has a profound stabilizing effect (Hastings, "The Lion and the Lamb Find Closure," *Science* vol. 290, 2000, p. 1712-13).

Politically, that is exactly what is happening in the United States. Ten years ago, we moved from southern California, an area of high taxes and heavy land-use regulations, to central Nevada, a rural area with few regulations in a state with

no income tax. If you examine an election map showing which counties each candidate carried, you can see clearly a dramatic distinction between the urban areas, where most of the tax predators live, and the rural areas, where tax prey can still escape to. It is because of the careful design of the Electoral College by the Founders that the United States is not dominated by a few large population centers.

Of course, there are limitations of predator-prey models for political analysis. Humans, unlike other animals, are capable of volitionally moving between the categories of "predator" and "prey" (or, more precisely, tax-money consumers and taxpayers), depending upon such things as the availability of economic opportunities and the severity of income-tax rates, and even of getting out of the game alto-

The 50-50 split between predators and prey is predicted by game theory, and has limited the spread of predation.

gether by not paying income taxes. Nonetheless, the analogy of predator-prey relationships lends valuable insight to the tax-consumer-taxpayer relationship.

The even split between tax predators and tax prey has limited the spread of predation. We fear, however, that we have seen a fundamental change in the nature of American elections with the development of large-scale legal litigation and the open use of widespread fraud in ballot-counting as political strategy. Lawyers are hatching all sorts of clever plots. For example, there are about four million convicted felons who are currently disenfranchised by state laws. Efforts are being made in several states, including Florida, Pennsylvania, and Washington, to re-enfranchise felons, who are likely to vote overwhelmingly Democratic.

Criminologist Christopher Uggen of the University of Minnesota says "Democrats have successfully co-opted Republican policies on crime. One unanticipated cost of that strategy has been the erosion of the Democratic voter base." Nancy Northrup, director of the Democracy Program at New York University's Brennan Center for Justice, is the lead attorney for the Florida ex-felons. "Disenfranchised felons used to represent 1% of Florida's voting age population," she says. "Now it's 5%." Counting both inmates and ex-inmates, 24% of Florida's voting age black males cannot vote (Goldhaber, "The Felon Vote," *The National Law Journal*, Oct. 30, 2000, p. A1).

The disenfranchisement of felons is yet another social problem resulting from the War on Drugs, which has made many non-violent drug offenders into felons. On the other hand, in many low-population rural counties where prisons are located, the majority of residents may vote Republican, but the felons could dominate the results of local elections, and possibly turn them into havens for tax consumers. Beyond those local effects, the re-enfranchisement of such a large number of felons — mostly in the tax-predator camp — could change the balance of power between predator and prey.

— Durk Pearson & Sandy Shaw



"Look at the bright side. At least it's not a hate crime."

Lights Out!

by Fred Smith

Environmentalism fantasizing and government regulations caused California's power failure.

California has an energy problem. Electricity rates skyrocketed in San Diego where prices were free to fluctuate; and brownout/blackout risks are mounting in much of the state served by Southern California Edison and Pacific Gas & Electric, where consumer rates are capped by government regulation. As we speak, California's utilities are paying more to purchase electricity than they are allowed to sell it for. They are unable to pay their bills and are facing bankruptcy.

Media and political commentators are blaming all of this on the market. California was working well, so we are told, but then free-market advocates pushed through a bill to deregulate the California system and screwed up everything. Gov. Davis is blaming everyone but himself and proposing tighter price controls and even a state takeover of the industry.

Lincoln once asked a friend: "If we call a dog's tail a leg; then how many legs does a dog have?" "Five," his friend answered. "No, still only four," Lincoln responded. "Calling a tail a leg doesn't make it one!" And so it is with the California "deregulation" story. California engaged in a game of regulatory shuffleboard, introducing new flexibilities and then checking them with new regulatory rigidities, but leaving the system as unresponsive as before. The flaws of the old system — which was widely perceived as helping out the utility management and its special-interest friends (the environmental-activist community in particular) — were not really addressed. When the smoke cleared, it was again the utilities and the greenies who came out on top. As Herbert Stein used to say, "When a thing can't go on forever, it will stop." That's what happened in California.

What's going on? And what, if anything, can be done about it? As we shall see, the California problem is the result of a long tradition of political control of electricity. Politics allowed the utilities to misinvest in capacity — first too much and then too little — and made it possible for environmental activists in the state to mandate a series of anti-

energy-use policies. The costs of the latter were paid for via cross-subsidies from other ratepayers. Neither of these situations could last long — both would have soon disappeared had the industry been deregulated.

But, of course, not much was really deregulated in California. Instead, the traditional regulatory structure — government-granted regional monopolies to firms, whose rates and terms of service are then regulated — was shuffled around. Some of the steps taken might have been useful; others were unnecessary; still others ensured the current disaster. First, the state viewed power generation as a competitive sector and thus deregulated it. The hope was that stand-alone firms would be more efficient and cost less to consumers. The existing utilities were required to sell off their generating capacity.¹ The new, independent, power providers would then be able to sell their power to whomever they wanted at whatever price they felt it warranted. The utilities would henceforth be involved only in distribution and retailing.

Free-market proposals for the distribution system were ignored, although the law did develop a timeline for allowing all consumers — commercial, industrial, and residential — the right to select their own supplier of electricity under whatever terms they found mutually advantageous. The grid would become a "common carrier," required to transmit the power generated by any firm to anyone — at a "fair" rate (how this was to be determined was never made clear).² The term for this was "retail wheeling," akin to the competition situation in telecommunications. No one gave much thought to why anyone would find it worthwhile to maintain,

expand, and upgrade the distribution grid.

But these problems were small in comparison to the two major changes in the deregulation plan: first, an authorized transmission charge accompanied by an electricity price cap; and, second, the blocking of long-term purchase contracts. Pacific Gas & Electric and Southern California Edison had major debt on their balance sheets. Under regulation, these debts were "safe" because the firms were allowed to set rates adequate to ensure "reasonable" capital cost recovery.

But once the cost of electricity was deregulated, with the prices charged to consumers capped, the utilities faced huge

We would simply conserve ourselves into energy adequacy, and we would do so while lowering electricity rates!

losses, even bankruptcy. In a free market, of course, bankruptcy plays an important role. Bankruptcy allows the revaluation of capital — an investment might have been prudently made, but circumstances can change, making the initial investment no longer viable.

For example, suppose an oil boom creates huge demand for temporary housing in central Colorado. An entrepreneur responds by building a large motel. To make a profit, he must have 60% occupancy at a rate of \$70 per night. Demand from energy workers is so good that the motel is able to charge \$80 per night and still get 70% occupancy. It is a profitable venture. But after a few months, the price of oil declines and it is no longer profitable to develop oil wells in the area. With the oil workers gone, the motel's occupancy rate falls to 20%, despite its cutting the room rate to \$50. The owner of the motel is now operating at a loss. Things don't get better, and eventually his debts exceed the value of the motel. A creditor sues and the motel cannot pay. The sheriff conducts a bankruptcy sale. The highest bid is only 20% of the cost of the motel. The new owner, thanks to his lower capital outlay, can operate the motel profitably with a 50% occupancy and a \$35 room rate. The lower room rate attracts enough bargain-minded travelers that the motel can be operated profitably.

This happens frequently: under bankruptcy, the original shareholders take the bullet, new shareholders acquire the assets at the adjusted price, and the game continues. No workers are shot; no assets are burned to the ground.

But bankruptcy in the regulated "safe" utility sector is politically undesirable — all shares in these firms seem to be held by widows and orphans — so the state decided to protect the firms. In the case of California utilities, the protection mechanism was to levy a transmission charge on everyone using the power grid; raising money the firms could use to pay their debts and protect their shareholders. Not a free-market concept, but one that seemed necessary to move ahead.

Unfortunately, this revenue-transfer scheme prompted the state to demand a *quid pro quo* from the utilities. The state would allow utilities to charge a recovery fee, but if they did so, they must in return accept a price cap on the rates they

charged their customers. One might have expected the utilities to have balked at this — to have insisted on a cost-plus rate adjustment factor or something — but at the time, everyone was convinced that deregulation would lower costs and thus lead to lower prices. But forecasting is not an exact science, and no one seemed worried that costs might increase. That optimism in part stemmed from the fact that the state then enjoyed a slight capacity surplus — more supply than demand — and the utilities believed that energy growth was a thing of the past. America was now in an energy stable mode. Indeed, with the Kyoto Treaty under consideration, with electric cars on the horizon, and with low-energy e-commerce soon to replace the old industries we might soon be mothballing plants. No one had to worry about supply — demand would only be going down.

Prior to deregulation, generation and distribution were integrated into the same company. California split the two functions among independent companies. Generation capacity and distribution grids are both expensive, long-lived capital investments. Normally, a firm would seek risk-sharing arrangements, whereby generators and distributors would sign long-term contracts at agreed-upon rates, probably to vary with generation costs. Generators would know that they could sell some portion of their output at an established price; distributors would know their purchase prices in advance.

But, again, the fear of markets, and concern that such arrangements might permit the firms to reunite, led to a rule against contracts. In California, market prices would be spot prices — the creative instrumentality of futures markets, which create major incentives for projections and for longer-term price stabilization instrumentalities, would not be involved.

These rigidities, which appeared to leave the utilities with more security, reflected the widespread demand-side beliefs of the time. California, more than almost any other state, promoted Demand Side Management. DSM, as it was known, argued that, of course, markets had failed, as there were a vast array of cost-effective energy-conservation measures that many businesses and almost all consumers failed to realize. Our lights were the wrong kind and too bright, our homes weren't adequately insulated, our cars were too big, our water pipes and electric wires were too small. Everywhere, the environmentalists contended, there was energy waste that could cheaply be eliminated. To address these market failures, the greens pressured the utilities to create a wide array of incentives to "encourage" consumers to "save" energy. A homeowner would be encouraged to install insulation or energy-efficient light bulbs and would receive an incentive payment to do so. The costs of these incentive programs would then be included in the rates charged to those users who elected not to join the conservation effort. One of the impacts of these laws was that electricity rates in California were much higher than in adjoining states (in the mid-1990s, Californians paid about 50% more for electricity than those in neighboring states). Moreover, evaluations of DSM programs gave little encouragement to the environmentalists' arguments; people wouldn't support them voluntarily. But in the California regulatory shuffleboard, with rates capped and capital costs guaranteed, the utilities would be able to continue their flirtation with the

greenies — or so it was believed.

California had other problems. It had moved aggressively away from coal and nuclear power, and even from oil. Natural gas was the fuel of choice for power generation in California. But natural gas is not an easily transported fuel — it can't be trucked (or, rather, not readily) like home-heating oil or propane; pipelines are needed. But the same anti-development logic buttressed by demand-side thinking blocked pipelines (and high-power electric transmission lines) also. Californians fought against developing the oil field off the Santa Barbara coast and stopped exploration activities elsewhere. California's energy policy — like that of the United States — was strictly demand-side; we would simply conserve ourselves into energy adequacy, and we would do so while lowering electricity rates!

The roots of the California electricity crisis lie deep in American history. American energy policy has long been political — one of the major "successes" of the progressives was the series of hydro-dams throughout the West. Taxpayer-supported electricity projects would light up the West; taxpayer-supported water projects would make the desert bloom. The initial "promotional progressive" era created real assets that produced real results. Aluminum plants and other industrial facilities expanded throughout the West. So did agriculture, as lands throughout the East and South reverted to wildlife habitat.

But, of course, such policies inevitably encourage wasteful resource practices that are difficult to correct. Consequences of this policy have emerged in the California crisis, as aluminum plants in the Northwest and fertilizer plants in the Midwest have found it more profitable to close down and sell their electricity or natural gas on the market.

But the promotional progressive era policies have shifted in recent years to those of a precautionary progressive era. We no longer seek expanded supply, but, rather, more prudent use of what we have. Conservation is our preferred source of energy. California, in particular, accepted the view that Amory Lovins and a host of other Malthusian energy gurus promote. According to this theory, building new power plants (and by extension, almost anything else) is foolish. The greatest source of energy is conservation — negawatts (the energy freed by increasing the efficiency of our society) would suffice for the modest energy needs of a post-materialistic society. Change a few light bulbs, add a little more insulation, buy an electric car — save money and energy at the same time! Electricity capacity has grown slowly, largely through plant upgrades (no major new plants came on line in the last decade), while demand increased

steadily.

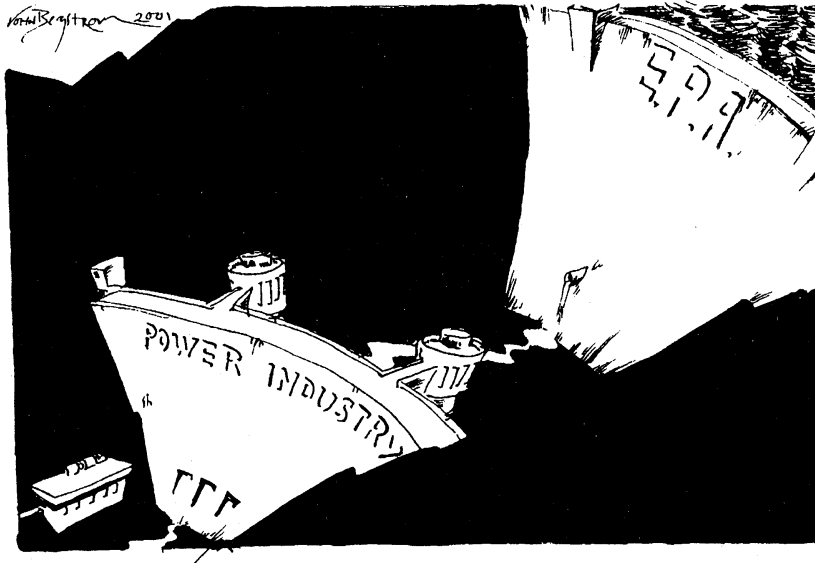
The result was inevitable: at current prices, there is more demand for electricity than can be supplied. In a free economy, prices are free to fluctuate; and when demand outstrips supply, the price rises, which provides buyers with an incentive to conserve and producers with an incentive to increase production.

But politics and the regulatory state make it difficult for supply and demand to equilibrate, and a vast array of regulatory impediments makes it very difficult to create new

capacity quickly. California seeks federal help, but there's no massive amount of power in the West to alleviate this situation. And people in neighboring states are not happy about the prospect of being penalized for California's stupidities. And, thanks again to regulatory roadblocks, there is not enough transmission capacity to resolve this problem by wheeling power in from the Midwest or East. Moreover, alternative

fuels — and here we mean natural gas, oil, and propane, not wood or solar — are also in short supply. (Coal is plentiful, but thanks to environmental activists, there is not a single coal-powered electricity plant in California.)

The result is the situation we have today. California's utilities teeter on the edge of bankruptcy, while California's governor is asking neighboring states to provide electricity at bargain rates and the federal government to bail out the utilities. □



Notes

- 1 Because of environmental reasons — largely the liability associated with nuclear plants and the conservation requirements associated with hydro-dams — the utilities retained that type of power source. Most of the facilities sold were gas-fired generators.
- 2 Free-marketers have developed some reasonable ideas about how networks emerging from such monopoly franchise situations might be privatized and deregulated; however, these ideas have never received much attention. Government control prevented competitive delivery systems, although, of course, there are some alternatives — natural gas or oil heating for electricity; self-generation; purchase from adjacent grids or private firms in the region. The general approach might be to allow prices to change slowly — a gradually expanding "zone of reasonableness" around established rates, while encouraging consumers and providers to invest in new linkages, line-sharing contractual arrangements, and decentralized power generation. Moving from a political to a private market will always involve messy transition problems of this sort — and messiness is not something that politicians wish to face.

Obituary

The Quiet Death of the Welfare State

by Stephen Berry

"My vision is not just to save the National Health Service but to make it better. The money will be there, I promise you that. This year, every year."

— Tony Blair, Sept. 30, 1997

On Bonfire Night (Nov. 5), children burn effigies of Guy Fawkes, the leader of the failed Gunpowder Plot of 1605 to blow up the Houses of Parliament, while Remembrance Day (Nov. 10) offers the chance to pay respects to those who died in the two world wars. These events mark the defeat of Britain's enemies and carry a positive message. But the patriotic Brit cannot rest on his laurels for long. Barely have the fireworks of Bonfire Night disappeared from the night sky when the next perennial, the annual winter crisis of the British National Health Service (NHS), announces its presence.

This winter, problems arrived even before the outbreak of the winter flu epidemic. In *The Times* (Oct. 18th), Professor Michael Joy, consultant cardiologist at St. Peter's hospital in Chertsey, wrote to complain that he could not admit patients from his Accident Department, due to the unavailability of beds in the main hospital. He said, "If nothing is done, I guarantee within the next weeks there will be a mighty crash. Everybody in the Health Service is totally demoralized. I have never seen morale at such a low level in my 35-year career." Even after making allowance for the hyperbole of a worker under stress, his claims are very disturbing. I have heard this song before. Last year, while being wheeled to the operating theater of one of Britain's NHS hospitals, I had an interesting conversation with a doctor visiting from New Zealand. Imagine my horror as the visiting doctor cheerfully compared the NHS to a Third World health service. Imagine my relief as the anaesthetic finally brought merciful oblivion.

The origins of the welfare state go back to the Victorian era and the desire to provide cheap housing for the poor, the best health care for all, and pensions (the British equivalent of Social Security) to make provisions for a comfortable retirement. During this time, it was Germany that most heavily influenced Britain in the formation of its social policies. It is difficult now to envisage the dramatic impact on the Victorian mind of the rapid unification of Germany under the leadership of Prussia. France, Britain's main European

rival for 250 years, was effortlessly dismissed on the battlefield of Sedan in 1870 and dominated with ease by its dynamic neighbor. There was a new kid on the block, and his every movement was watched both eagerly and anxiously.

In the late 19th century, Germany had the most powerful socialist party in the world. In 1878, Bismarck temporarily banned it and implemented a form of state welfare to placate the working classes and to avoid a socialist revolution. In the 1880s, the state began to provide accident, health, and pension insurance.

The German system became the conscious model for Lloyd George and William Beveridge, the latter being the most influential in the creation of the British welfare state. Beveridge visited Germany in 1907 and Lloyd George followed in 1908. The extension of the franchise to working-class men in the United Kingdom had already occurred in 1885, and a system of state social insurance was implemented. The profit system, with what were regarded by many as its vagaries and caprices, was left in place. Indeed, Beveridge seems to have seen no conflict between state action and the free market: interventionist social policies would serve to strengthen the market and make it more efficient than ever.

Subsequent developments have increasingly diverged from these early hopes and expectations. Pioneering work by The Institute of Economic Affairs in London has demonstrated the degree and vitality of the early private provision of the social services which were to become the province of the state. As British governments developed the welfare state during the 20th century and snuffed out the existing mechanisms for private provision, no evidence of

gratitude from the British citizens can be found. Instead, we find increasing attempts by people to protect themselves from the poor level of welfare services provided by the state. The history of the welfare state is the history of the flight from the welfare state.

The Local Government Housing Sector was established after 1919. Rent control appeared during World War I and remained until the late 1980s, when the government began to dismantle the program. Large "slum" clearance programs have transformed whole neighborhoods. In 1914, 90% of dwellings were privately rented and 10% owned. By 1993, only 10% of dwellings were privately rented, with 20% provided by Local Government. Roughly 70% of homes were

Government intervention in the housing market has simply driven Englishmen out of rented accommodation into inflation-hedged miniature castles that they can proudly call their own.

privately owned. In other words, the 20th century in the United Kingdom has witnessed a trend from homes being largely privately rented to being largely privately owned. Government intervention in the housing market has simply driven Englishmen out of rented accommodation into inflation-hedged miniature castles that they can proudly call their own.

In 1893, the famous Cambridge economist Alfred Marshall told the Royal Commission on the Aged Poor to resist the call for universal pensions advised by Fabian socialists Sidney and Beatrice Webb. He warned that they "do not contain . . . the seeds of their own disappearance. I am afraid that, if started, they would tend to become perpetual." State intervention in the provision of retirement income was developed by acts of Parliament in 1908, 1925, and 1948. By the last act, state provision covered virtually the entire population, but here again, the results have been far different from those expected by the original reformers.

During the 1990s there was a minor scandal concerning private pensions. Claims were made that salesmen may not have given absolutely correct information concerning future returns to prospective customers. Yet, even this might be preferable to state pensions. When one purchases a private pension, the money he pays goes to the creation of a fund of capital that will be at his disposal when he retires from work. With the state pension, his money is simply taken and used as if it were any other form of tax revenue. Upon retirement, a person is entirely dependent on the state's capacity to tax for his future pension, and there is plenty of competition chasing those taxes. That is the great 20th century pension swindle, perpetrated on a scale that would make the slickest of salesmen shake his head with bemused admiration.

Many people in the United Kingdom have fled from the trap of the state pension. The last 30 years have seen a dramatic expansion of private pension provision through company and individual schemes. Nearly two-thirds of the United Kingdom's population is now covered privately in one form or another. This is in stark contrast to Continental

Europe where, with the exception of Holland and Switzerland, pensions are funded almost entirely by the state. For these countries, the problems of the aging population will be particularly pronounced.

It was in the area of health care that the state made the most radical innovations, and it is in the area of health care

In the year 2050, when yet another socialist centenarian appears on our television screens lamenting the disappearance of the last remnants of the welfare state, we should remember that her longevity cannot be credited to the second-rate care afforded by the state.

where the problems are the most intractable. The NHS is the jewel in the crown of the British welfare state, though it arrived relatively late upon the scene, in 1948. Private provision for health care was extensive and growing at the start of the 20th century, with people paying by a variety of methods. The British state initially brought in state health insurance to help pay for private health care bills. But the post-W.W.II Labor government was not satisfied with such routine measures. It came up with the marvelous wheeze of health care "free at the point of demand." One simply turned up at the doctor's office or his local hospital and treatment would be provided — no questions asked. If socialists were never to realize their dream of a society free of money and prices, the NHS would remain to provide a gleam of the promised land.

Those with an acquaintance of economics might suggest at this point that an important service which is free at the point of demand will have a large demand. And they will not be surprised to know that history has proven them right. Rationing has been the main mechanism used to contain consumption. Users of the NHS have to wait a considerable length of time for non-critical operations, and the standard of treatment one gets depends very much on which area of the country he is located in. The definition of a non-critical operation can also be somewhat stretched. One woman created headlines last year when she wrote to Prime Minister Blair to say that her husband had had to wait so long for his heart bypass that he died. But it is rather unfair to expect Mr. Blair to sort out the problems of the NHS. History will see his efforts as a final, futile attempt to save a decaying system. Blair is a modern-day Necker, the minister of Louis XVI, whose reforms predictably failed to rejuvenate the enfeebled carcass of the *ancien régime*.

In the face of a crumbling state system, people have done what is natural: they have made private provisions for their future health care bills. Health insurance is increasingly included as part of any job remuneration package, and I have no doubt that it will eventually match the company pension in popularity.

Opinion polls still show the NHS to be popular in principle, but even this is gradually fading under the relentless pressure of poor standards and the never-ending cycle of crises. And there is the pertinent point made by

Arthur Seldon of The Institute of Economic Affairs: many opinion polls are less than informative unless a price label is attached. What people say and what they do can be quite different things. Even those who profess to admire the NHS are taking out private health insurance, and they are doing so in increasing numbers.

The next 50 years will see the further withdrawal of the state from welfare services and its replacement by private provision. Libertarians of the more radical persuasion who would launch a *putsch* against the crumbling edifice of the welfare state will be disappointed. Like Rome, the welfare state was not built in a day, and its fall will be a matter of decades, not something accomplished with a sweep of the revolutionary's baton.

The end, if prolonged, is certain. Two-thirds of the population have made private provision for retirement, and William Hague, the leader of the Conservative Party, wants to offer people under the age of 30 the chance to opt out of the state system entirely. The remaining public housing system is expensive to maintain. Paradoxically, it would be cheaper for politicians to give away state-owned houses and apartments to existing tenants and wash their hands of the whole business than to continue with the present system. As incomes continue to rise, people who can afford foreign holidays in high-standard hotels will not tolerate third-rate service in NHS hospitals.

What will be history's verdict on the British welfare state? Its main crime was the replacement of the burgeoning and varied private provision of welfare with the uniformity and mediocrity of the state monopoly; the values of the entrepreneur substituted with those of the administrator. The aim of state welfare was to remove divisions in society. Ironically, the effect has been to make those divisions more visible. Nothing is clearer in the United Kingdom today than

the accommodation gap between the tenant in public housing and the homeowner. Nothing is more poignant than the difference between the pensioner who uses an ample private pension to spend the winter months in Spain and the pensioner dependent on state benefits alone to fund the winter fuel bills. The charge sometimes leveled against the welfare state — that it suffocates by providing security "from the cradle to the grave" — is wrong. The welfare state failed because the level of security provided was far below that which the citizen could rightly expect at the end of the 20th century.

At a perhaps more important level, the impact of the welfare state may not have been that great. I have already pointed out that in the areas of pensions and housing, the vast majority of people have been able to circumvent and mitigate the low standards of welfare provided by the state. Even with the NHS, we should be careful not to overestimate the damage. Life expectancy in the United Kingdom is not much different from that of countries which have not enjoyed such an extensive nationalized health service. The state sector of the economy in Britain has always been small and the effects of the market are pervasive. Such factors as improved nutrition, central heating, new drugs, and changes in personal behavior may well have had a greater impact on health than anything the medical profession has done.

A 150-year experiment is drawing ever so slowly to its close. But when, in the year 2050, yet another socialist centenarian appears on our television screens lamenting the disappearance of the last remnants of the welfare state, we should remember that her longevity cannot be credited to the second-rate care afforded by the state. Rather, she continues as triumphant evidence of the market's ability to improve the quantity and quality of our lives — even in the most unpromising of circumstances. □

Letters, from page 6

impression he had some disagreement with them?

David Ramsay Steele
Chicago, Ill.

No, Let's . . . Disagree

David Ramsay Steele's alleged mystification results from his unwillingness to accept the distinction that I have drawn above between deriving "theory" and understanding "practice." To repeat, Austrians generally accept that the *a priori* methodology can reveal basic economic principles and are skeptical that alternative methodologies can, as Steele puts it, "generate economic theory." But, importantly, they also accept that data and data analysis may be helpful in enriching our understanding of how (and whether) deduced theories work themselves out in practice . . . i.e., in unique historical events. Why this reasonable distinction between doing "theory" on the one hand and doing "history" or "analysis" on the

other cannot be understood or accepted is puzzling, indeed.

Dom Armentano
Vero Beach, Fla.

Ruminations on Mutations

On p. 15 of the January 2001 *Liberty*, you mentioned "Nadler's comically misshapen head." At first glance, I read "conically misshapen head," which would have fit equally well.

Thomas Giesberg
Rosharon, Tex.

Equal Pay for Unequal Work?

The saga of merit pay in education goes on, as reported by Adrian Day (*Reflections*, January), and the argument usually ends up where the NEA wants it to: there is no objective way to assess superiority or excellence in teaching. Let's ignore the teaching profession's reluctance to acknowledge anything that rises above mediocrity. At a high school where I taught, the teachers'

union bargained to eliminate the "excellent" category in teacher evaluations. Everyone was "satisfactory." We're all just plain folks.

Maybe the solution is, as implied in the study that Day cited, some sort of differential pay scale. Does anyone really think that an elementary school physical education teacher should be paid the same as a calculus or biology advanced-placement teacher?

Bill Nadeau
San Diego, Calif.

Slavery's Sloppy History

I disagree with Nicholas Weininger's intriguing suggestion (*Letters*, January 2001) that abolitionist William Lloyd Garrison be adopted as a model. Garrison's anti-slavery message, says Weininger, started as a fringe rant. An uncompromising Garrison "kept at it" while he "rejected political action."

continued on page 22

Abortion and Hypocrisy

by Charles S. Rebert

Pro-abortion arguments may tug at our emotions, but they ignore important principles and facts.

I am a cluster of some billions of cells, a living, dynamic, sentient, imaginative, being. My capacities allow me to remember my past and to imagine my future. At age 62 postpartum, I am not exactly as I was at age 32; my corpus, this cluster of cells, is more rotund, and my mental faculties less profound, than when I was 32. I remember me when I was 50, and 32, and 18, and 3 years old. When I meet old friends I may not identify them immediately, but when I learn their names, the young face emerges from the camouflage of age. My awareness is not all encompassing.

There are things about me that intrude only minimally upon my awareness — my beating heart, air passing through my nostrils when I breathe, dim inklings of impulses and desires, the subtle control of complex movements. And, there are things of which I have no conscious awareness — the rise and fall of protein receptors in the fluid matrix of my cells; those hidden, but profound, Freudian impulses; and the animalistic reactions triggered by pheromones. My mature capacities allow me to create an infinite variety of ideas and to communicate them by way of a language based on a paltry 26 elements of my alphabet. It was not always so. When I was 20 months postpartum, I wanted to know the names of all things; I could mostly just point and say “da.” Yet I could understand the request to “put your yellow ducky back in your toy box.” It was not always so. Although it is not clear in my memory now, there was a time when I had little understanding of words and syntax. There was a time when I couldn’t walk, and a time when I couldn’t crawl. There was a time when suckling was my prime contentment. There was a time when I was not sentient and only the most primitive of mechanisms sustained me, when I was entirely unconscious, like only part of me now. I don’t remember, but my mother assures me that it was me then, and it was me who that wonder of conception made a living thing of, and who was nourished in her womb, and who grew into a larger cluster of cells, and who was born to her. It was at that moment of conception I began to grow, to respond to the genetic and envi-

ronmental influences that played upon me, and to become who I am now.

I am glad no one killed me yesterday because it was a happy day. I am glad no one killed me when I was 50, too, because I would have missed the culmination of a career and the freedom of retirement. I’m glad no one killed me when I was 32, because I would have missed the human experience of wife and family and the challenge and accomplishment of work. I’m glad no one killed me when I was 18 because I enjoyed the trim muscular state of my cell cluster then, and the adventure of breaking the bounds of childhood and learning to be a man. Thank you everyone for not killing me when I was 3 because I would have missed learning to tie my shoes, to run fast, to ride my bicycle, to speak fluently, to learn to read and write, to appreciate smoke curling from a chimney, and to appreciate love more fully. I am glad no one killed me when I was only a cluster of twelve cells because I would have missed my life. It was me all the time, never exactly the same, growing, maturing, but still that unique cluster, sometimes small, sometimes larger, sometimes dim, sometimes profound, but me — unique in the universe.

What would I think of a Mom, who might, on her whim, have killed me because I would have been an inconvenient burden, or compromised her career plans? I could make that evaluation only after I developed a set of values and principles. In my particular case those values and principles are generally associated with the concepts of liberty, individual sovereignty, and responsibility, the social philosophy, more or less, known as libertarianism. At the very least, we as libertarians believe these things:

1. Humans are rational, logical, beings who survive and

prosper most when they live in accordance with those capacities;

2. Societies must enforce the fundamental thesis that human interactions should be voluntary and devoid of force or fraud;

3. Each individual is a sovereign being, responsible for one's own life, whose life cannot be arbitrarily taken;

4. Laws are instituted and implemented by governments to codify in logical ways the rules of social interactions so that disputes can be resolved through mutually understood procedures, rather than by whim and arbitrariness;

5. Governments are established to protect human rights; those realms of human action that are necessary to a peaceful and productive society in which individuals are free to choose and pursue life in ways most compatible with their unique physiological and psychological capacities. Governments must protect the odd, the profound, the deviant, and the weak, from the powerful, the intolerant, and the selfish.

An embryo conceived of human beings is itself a human being. The "right to life" of a human being is as applicable to a person who is aged one day post-conception, or is comprised of just twelve cells, as to a person who is a hundred years old and comprised of some billions of cells, irrespective of the state of sentience. If it is acceptable to kill a developing human being, who just happens to still be in a womb,

How trivial are these worries when a human life is trivialized by referring to it as "a cluster of cells." Doing so is akin to using terms like "niggers," "junkies," and "queers." It dehumanizes them, paving the rhetorical road to eliminating them.

acceptable for a woman to kill the life within her on any whimsy, why is it unacceptable to kill any inconvenient person at any time for any reason?

Equally irrational is the argument that since women own their own bodies, they have the right to abort their pregnancies. Women might own their own bodies, but no person rightly owns another. Pregnant women are responsible for the new human life they carry, but they do not own it.

The developing child *in utero* is not able to be party to voluntary agreements regarding his or her fate, so adults

who profess to embrace the principle of nonviolence must assume the mantle of maturity, responsibility, honesty, and consistency in applying the principle. Killing an unborn child is especially heinous because it is a unilateral decision perpetrated on an innocent. To support abortion is to violate

I'm glad no one killed me when I was 18 because I enjoyed the trim muscular state of my cell cluster then, and the adventure of breaking the bounds of childhood and learning to be a man.

the principles of nonviolence, individual sovereignty, and the right to life.

If libertarians do not support the sanctity of life, how meaningful are their lamentations about arbitrary kings and bureaucrats, socialist impediments to production, violations of the right to worship, or to live freely? How trivial are these worries when a human life is trivialized by referring to it as "a cluster of cells," thereby justifying the elimination of it! The approach is akin to using terms like "japs," "niggers," "wops," "junkies," and "queers." Dehumanize them, paving the rhetorical road to eliminating them.

Libertarians who find the unrestricted killing of the unborn acceptable simply on the basis of inconvenience reveal no true understanding of the principles they claim to live by. They are in the camp of the arbitrary. The generalized justifications of abortion on the bases of its potential benefits to health; or that pregnancies have resulted from involuntary interactions (rape), are the epitome of misdirection. Most pregnancies result from voluntary sexual interactions and few abortions are precipitated by possible risks of a pregnancy to health; they are undertaken as concessions to inconvenience.

Sarah McCarthy insults us in her article "Walking the GOP's Abortion Plank," (November). She induces us to weep over a few true tragedies, and seduces our sentiments, but tries to deflect our intelligence. The tragedies of health are insignificant in number compared to the wanton destruction of babies for ends that are trivial compared to the termination of a new life. Hypocrisy, indeed! How will you kill me, Sarah, when my old countenance becomes disagreeable to you and my consciousness enfeebled and childlike? □

Letters, from page 20

Eventually — success!

But slavery collapsed of its own weight, much like the Soviet empire, more than it was torn down by abolitionists. Until secession, the pro-slavery side held all the cards. Abolition required a constitutional amendment, which meant a three-fourths majority of the states, but 15 of

33 were slave states. Pro-slavery Democrats even held majorities in the House and Senate at the time of secession.

A seeming paranoid irrationality produced overreactions and tactical blunders (chiefly secession) that permitted slavery's demise. Perhaps subconscious guilt over slavery made for

muddled minds.

There was much more to ending slavery than a zealot getting on his soapbox day after day, until finally the masses woke up and saw the light.

Russell B. Garrard
Seattle, Wash.

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Rethinking the Mega-State

by William E. Merritt

How many lives is it worth to live in a really *big* country?

There's a lot to admire about Czechoslovakia. The Sudeten Mountains are lovely. The people are upright and industrious and, during the '20s and '30s, they kept their democracy among a sea of fascists, petty Soviets, and tin-pot monarchies. After that, they held onto civilization and decency for half a century under the Nazi, then the Communist, boot.

But one of the things that is most admirable about Czechoslovakia is that there's no such place anymore. Because, as soon as they sent the Reds packing, they negotiated the Velvet Divorce. And not a single Czech, or Slovak or Slav or Slovenian, or Romany or Romanov or Romanian, or Magyar or Moravian or Moldavian, or anybody else left over from some long-ago wandering, died to make it happen. They just voted themselves apart.

Canada, too, is lovely, dark, and deep. Sure, they play a godless form of football up there, and they decorate their envelopes with pictures of a sour-looking lady who can't hold a candle to fat Elvis in the jazzy-postage-stamp department. But they make good beer and great whiskey. And the Mounties dress much better than the FBI.

More than that, they don't grow heroin poppies or cocaine leaves. Fire ants and killer bees and boll weevils don't come from that direction, and they don't breed strange terrorist groups that come bubbling across the border to inflict their evils upon our people. Illegal Canadian immigrants don't march around Los Angeles waving Maple Leaf flags and demanding the lost provinces back. And, their economy doesn't periodically go kablooie after some crook of an ex-prime minister skips town.

Here is an interesting Canada fact: The population of the country is about 30 million, with over 7 million living in Quebec. Not that I'm suggesting our neighbor to the north might be following along blindly in the footprints of the United States, but these numbers sound creepily reminiscent of U.S. census figures of 1860. Just before the Civil War, the population of the United States was about 31 million, with

about 9 million living in the South.

There are other similarities between Quebec and the Old South. Both places get all stirred up at the notion of outsiders messing in their business. They get too much of their sense of who they are from historical fiction. And everybody else thinks they talk funny.

My question is, what's Canada worth? How many Canadians do you think should die to keep the people with French last names saluting the same flag as those with English last names?

It turns out there is an answer to this — an official answer issued by the Canadian government itself. And the number is: zero. No Canadians at all are going to die to hold the place together. When it comes to going its own way, the Quebecois will have to figure that out for themselves. If 50% plus one want out, then out they go, and one of the great civilized nations of all times busts up.

Yet 600,000 Americans died to keep us one nation, indivisible, with liberty and justice for all — and Abraham Lincoln is hailed ever after as a hero for making it happen. So . . . does this mean that a single Canadian life is worth 600,000 times that of an American? I bet you could find some folks who, deep in their Molson's, would tell you so.

Or, could it mean that the United States is worth 600,000 times as much as Canada?

But when you stop talking Quebec and start talking American South, nobody doubts — even in the shadow of our civilized example to the north — that 600,000 deaths and all the destruction that came along with them, were a good bargain because, today, the sons of Georgians and the sons

of Virginians still pledge allegiance to the same flag as the sons of Vermonters and the sons of Michiganders.

But that's about as far as the outcome takes us. All the rest is no more than the triumph of some glandular notion of bigness — of the idea that one huge, united country is inherently better than a brotherhood of smaller republics. That, and a testament to the lasting power of Abraham Lincoln's words echoing down through the generations: words that kept us together as a country — and have torn us apart as a people — ever since.

There's no question that bigness has its comforts. It's hard not to like the idea that the Grand Canyon and the Grande Ronde and the Grand Tetons are in the same country, as is the Chesapeake Bay and Biscayne Bay and Half Moon Bay, and Boston and San Francisco and both Portlands. And that, in some sense, these places belong to all of us and to all our kids. And that we can drive to them and to ten thousand other places and "Purple Mountain Majesties," while we're at it, and never have to stop at a single checkpoint for any reason other than to hand over our illegal vegetables. And we can do it without studying up on some barbaric tongue, swapping greenbacks for somebody else's low-rent Monopoly money, pulling off the interstate highway, or eating anywhere but McDonald's.

The thing is, we'd feel that way no matter what borders our history had tossed up. If we'd won the War of 1812, we could munch Happy Meals all the way to the North Pole, and our "Sea to Shining Seas" would include the Arctic Ocean and the St. Lawrence Seaway, and we'd be just as passionate about these places as well.

But we didn't. And so what?

The bigness is all still here. I can drive to Banff or Lake Louise as easily as if we'd won. And any Canadian is likely to be more welcome than I in south-central L.A. And I am as free a man in their country as I am in my own, and as safe under their laws. Their roads are as paved as ours, their gasoline as pure and sweet, and their Big Macs as tasty.

It would be the same if the South had been allowed to go its own way. I could still drive the family down to Dollywood, or watch truck and tractor pulls until I needed reconstructive ear surgery. And all of it would seem just as natural and as preordained as the current arrangements strike us now.

As for protecting ourselves against outsiders who do not approve of how we conduct ourselves in the world, nothing would be much different. When we Americans get into serious squabbles — not just the throwing our weight around kind, but the life-and-death sort of thing that tends to come

up when the Europeans lose track of their affairs and a generation of North Americans has to sally across the waters to save them from themselves — then do we miss all the extra bigness we gave away for not having a more efficient army back in 1812?

Not hardly.

Every time — against Kaiser and Fuhrer, against Politburo and Ayatollah and Republican Guard, Canada has been right there beside us, as loyal a friend as if things had worked out the way God intended in 1814.

Does anybody seriously believe that, had the South been allowed to depart in peace, brave Confederate infantry would not have stormed ashore at Normandy shoulder-to-shoulder with U.S. and Canadian troops? Does anybody doubt that the Stars and Bars would have snapped proudly

The North, with all its manpower and industrial might, fought the Civil War for a year and a half on the cry "For the Union," and they fought it to a bloody standstill.

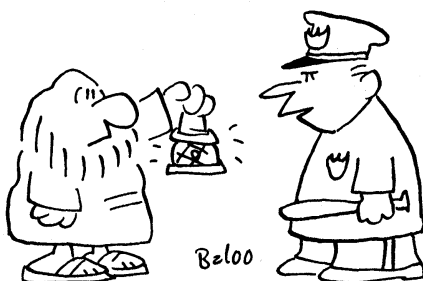
over Berlin in May of 1945 along with the Tri-Color, the Union Jack, the Hammer and Sickle, and Old Glory herself? In 1860, we would have done well to have had a Canada with its own secession problems squatting up there on our northern border to show us what we could be. Because, as foolish as it seems today, we went to war for no better purpose than to hold the country together. Getting rid of slavery had nothing to do with it — at least not at first.

Sure, race and slavery were on everybody's mind when the Civil War started. Race and slavery have been on every American's mind since the day in 1619 when John Rolfe looked over the manifest of an off-course Dutch merchant ship and decided to invest in a few hands to help bring in the tobacco crop. But, in 1860, nobody outside the lunatic fringe wanted America to go to war over slavery any more than the most radicalized animal-rights activist thinks the rest of Canada should shoot it out with Quebec to put a stop to cock-fighting.

But, glandular notions of bigness were not enough to hold our republic together. The North, with all its manpower and industrial might, with all its overseas trade and technology, fought the Civil War for a year and a half on the cry "For the Union," and they fought it to a bloody standstill. There simply weren't enough people willing to die for bigness.

So, on Sep. 22, 1862, Abraham Lincoln saved the Union by playing his race card. He issued the Emancipation Proclamation and transformed the purpose of the struggle from tattered notions of togetherness to the shining ideal of Government-Guaranteed Freedom. And he did it to win the war:

Now, therefore, I, Abraham Lincoln, President of the United States, by virtue of the power in me vested as Commander-in-Chief of the Army and Navy of the United States, in time of actual armed rebellion against the authority and government of the United States, and as a fit and neces-



"You're looking for an honest man? Are you trying to make trouble?"

sary war measure for suppressing said rebellion . . . do order and declare that all persons held as slaves . . . are, and henceforward shall be, free; and that . . . such persons of suitable condition will be received into the armed service of the United States to garrison forts, positions, stations and other places, and to man vessels of all sorts . . . And upon this act, sincerely believed to be an act of justice, warranted by the Constitution upon military necessity, I invoke the considerate judgment of mankind and the gracious favor of Almighty God.

With these words ringing in its ears, the North waded back into the fight and soldiered through to the total collapse of the Confederacy and, under the guise of emancipation, secured not only union, but a hundred years of Jim Crow, second-class citizenship, race riots, suspicion, Kluxers, and Reverend Al Sharptons.

We got all that and more because Mr. Lincoln's words struck home not just in the North, but in the South, as well — and that is the pity. Southerners who, in their own minds, had been up to nothing more than asserting their God-given right to take their place among the nations of the world, suddenly found themselves widowed, impoverished, orphaned, and reviled on a scale seldom equaled. They cast about to find a reason, aside from their own arrogance, for the plague of calamities. And they discovered in their midst the very people in whose name the conquerors had brought all this suffering and death upon them. Pointing the finger let them save their pride and clutch resentment to their bosoms for a century and more of blaming others, more impoverished and downtrodden than even themselves, for their troubles.

If you think I'm overstating, just read Charles Darwin's *Zoology of the Voyage of the HMS Beagle*.

Darwin was a racist in his own way, but he reserved his contempt for Indians — not the pale, imitation, Hindu-style Indians in South Asia, but the original, full-blooded, First-Nation Indians of our own hemisphere. Why he should have felt this way, growing up in Indian-free Shrewsbury, is hard to decipher, but he most assuredly did. You can't read the

Abraham Lincoln saved the Union by playing his race card.

Beagle without coming away certain of this fact. And, because he had no biases against blacks, another thing you will come away certain about is how truly terrible slavery was in Brazil.

When the *HMS Beagle* floated down Rio way on its journey to the Galapagos and glory, Darwin spent time ashore being wined and feted by upper-crust, plantation-owning Brazilians — giving him ample time to see how they treated their slaves. The things Darwin observed would have curled the toes of the most hardened massa in the Old South — and his hosts were on their best behavior. What went on when he was out of the room must be almost unimaginable now.

Slavery didn't even have the decency to end on time in Brazil, but was still creaking and sputtering along in 1888 when Parliament finally outlawed it, without compensating the slaveholders. Since slaveholders tended to be rich land-

owners, they were in a position to hit back. And hit back they did: they overthrew the government and set up a republic modeled, with a wonderful irony, on our own. But by then it was too late for the landowners to get their slaves back.

With slavery of unparalleled brutality stretching perilously close to the 20th century, a slavery that ended in a not particularly graceful manner, one might expect some ugly repercussions to echo down through the generations to haunt modern-day Brazilians. Instead, they got over it.

Today, Brazil is as comfortably racially mixed as anywhere on our sad, old planet. Indeed, Brazil is a nation that

Our own history wouldn't be burdened with the deaths of 600,000, the ruin of an entire region, and a hundred years of hatred. All the government had to do to make it so was nothing.

stands forth to the rest of the world as a beacon of tolerance and racial enlightenment.

And what is our record? What kind of example does the Land of the Free offer the world today? How enlightened are our racial policies in the eyes of the civilized and savage alike?

Does a 21st-century American visiting Nairobi brag about our race relations? Can we, without blushing, preach to the French about the correct way to treat the Algerians in their midst? Or do we find it easier to talk about international loans, scientific farming, and disease prevention?

It's the way slavery ended here — with fire and sword, hatred and recriminations; with one-quarter of white men dead in the field; with an entire region ruined, with land and homes and industry destroyed; with railroads torn up, ports wrecked, cities burned, and three generations crushed by poverty. All done in the name of a present and visible minority.

The sad part is that it did not have to be this way. By 1860, slavery was dying all over the world. Even in poor, backward Brazil, it only had another 28 years. In the relatively up-to-date American South, a near majority of whites had already turned against it. It would have fallen under its own weight if the government had not taken a hand and forced tepid Southerners to become defenders of the indefensible.

And it wasn't just that the better angels of our nature were on the verge of triumph. The economics of the enterprise were heading south, as well. In 1859, slavery was going through a classic bubble economy. At the outset of the Civil War, a healthy, male slave baby cost more in the equivalent purchasing power expressed in wagons and seed corn, in implements and dry goods and machinery, than he could ever earn back in a lifetime of toil.

This bubble was going to burst and slaves were going to go the way of tulip bulbs in Holland — only more so. It was

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Libertarian Activism: Time for a Change?

In the January Liberty, R.W. Bradford concluded an article about the disappointing results for Libertarian Party candidates in the November elections with an invitation for readers to participate in a symposium on libertarian activism. Specifically, he posed these questions to readers:

- *Should libertarians abandon the hope (or the pretense) that the LP might become a major party?*
- *Should libertarians continue to operate as a minor party on the fringe of American politics?*
- *Should libertarians continue to believe that we are having an impact?*
- *Is there any way to reorganize or reorient our efforts so that we can achieve some of our goals?*
- *Should libertarians abandon political activism altogether?*

A few days later, Bradford invited several prominent libertarians to address the same questions by writing an essay or article for publication in Liberty, which were published as a symposium in our February issue.

We continue that symposium in this issue.

Let a Thousand Flowers Bloom

by Ed Crane

To point out the obvious, there is no one approach to changing society that is absolutely superior to all others. Objective and subjective conditions for change (as Lenin pointed out) often conflict and are, in any event, always changing. A strategy that works in one decade may well not work in another. Further, the individuals carrying them out are invariably better-suited for one approach than another. Let a thousand flowers bloom, as another famous commie once said.

The recent discussions centering around the Libertarian Party, with which I have not been involved for two decades now, mostly seem to suggest that the third-party approach is a futile crusade. I agree. I spent the better part of a decade —

from 1972 to 1980 — trying to make the LP work and, while we had some successes, setbacks were the order of the day. And so it's been ever since.

Let me first say that I have tremendous admiration for those who continue to try change things through the LP. I know first-hand what they're up against. Here is some unsolicited advice about how to improve things.

First, redefine radical. The truth is that libertarianism is a radical, in the sense of fundamental, political philosophy. Most of its adherents explicitly or intuitively understand this. Libertarians are out to fundamentally change the political culture in America. The question is, how do you do it? Too often we think of a radical as someone who dresses in black and stands on a hill waving a black flag yelling "smash the state!" But that person isn't being radical, he's being silly. The true radical is the one who's most effective in changing the direction of society, or at least at changing the nature of the debate.

This "black-flag radicalism" manifests itself in the LP primarily through the you're-either-pregnant-or-you're-not approach to recruiting. Agree with us on 90% of the issues, but think troops in Bosnia will prevent genocide? Go find another party. Agree with us on 90% of the issues, but wonder if open borders might flood the nation with people who have little understanding of our political heritage? Go find another party.

There are dozens of libertarian positions that are counter-intuitive to people of good will who fundamentally accept our premise that the proper role of government is to protect individual rights to life, liberty, and property. Too often they don't feel welcome in the Libertarian Party, or even the libertarian movement.

This raises a related point. Regrettably, the non-initiation of force axiom does not spark an epiphany in 95% of our fellow Americans. (More research needs to be done on the Myers-Briggs INTJ phenomenon, whereby 4% of the general public falls into that psychological category but upwards of 40% of libertarians do.) I think there is a huge demand for a party that supports dynamic capitalism (to be redundant), social tolerance, and an end to America's role as the world's

911. It's a combination of views not offered by either the Democrats or the Republicans, as we all know all too well. Present those three themes with passion and practical applications (NAFTA, a low flat tax, ending the drug war, Social Security privatization, bringing the troops home) and the chances of building a real third party are greatly enhanced. Insist on shoving every libertarian position on every issue down the public's throat and, well, we know what that results in.

Second, it's the money, stupid. In 1996 Harry Browne asked me for some advice for his campaign. I have a great deal of respect for the effort Harry has put in over the past five or six years to spread the libertarian message via his presidential campaigns. But when I suggested that he should spend every waking minute trying to track down a vice-presidential running mate who could kick in \$10 million or so to the campaign, his response was, "Well, my first priority in a v.p. candidate is someone who will do well in the debates." Without the money, I tried to point out, there is, of course, no chance for debates.

But it's worse than that. Without the money, there is no chance for any third party in America. If you look at the floor debates during the effort to amend the Federal Elections Campaign Act in 1974, you'll see congressmen saying, in effect, "Look, in the wake of Vietnam and Watergate, support for the two-party system is at an all-time low. If we don't do something to shore up the two-party system, we're going to be looking at some competition." So they passed \$100,000 spending limits on congressional races and \$1,000 contribution limits for federal candidates. When the Supreme Court struck down the spending limits but upheld the contributions in early 1976 (as though the two were not related), the LP would have been wise to fold its tents. For without viable congressional campaigns in at least 40 or 50 districts, you don't really have a party anyone takes seriously. And you simply can't run viable congressional cam-

There are dozens of libertarian positions that are counterintuitive to people of good will who fundamentally accept our premise that the proper role of government is to protect individual rights.

paings as a third party with \$1,000 contribution limits. Can't be done. It's why even with lots of dough to be spent at the presidential level, the Reform Party was never the real deal.

A viable Libertarian Party awaits repeal of contribution limits for federal candidates. Until then — and until it redefines its radicalism — it remains more of a social club than a serious political force.

There isn't space here to go into a lengthy discussion of what strategy might work best for the movement under current circumstances. I do believe that the debate over campaign finance reform represents a frightening threat to our liberties as well as a possible opportunity. Both houses of

Congress favor making it illegal for Americans to get together and go on television or buy newspaper ads that even mention the name of a candidate for federal office sixty days prior to an election. Only the heroic efforts of Sen. Mitch McConnell prevented that from becoming law. Congress is also out to stamp out issue-advocacy ads, which

Regrettably, the non-initiation of force axiom does not spark an epiphany in 95% of our fellow Americans.

really are the market response to the \$1,000 contribution limits.

I think such independent ads may be a great hope for liberty in the coming years. There's a new group, the Universal Savings Alliance, that intends to by-pass the politicians and go directly to the American people with ads promoting the many benefits of a privatized Social Security system. Groups promoting school choice and an end to the government schooling monopoly are also flexing their muscles. The tobacco companies successfully implemented this strategy several years ago when they gave up on their lobbyists and the politicians and went directly to the people with ads proclaiming, "By the way, this [new tax] isn't about teenage smoking, it's about big government and higher taxes."

Independent groups using the media will be very important for libertarians from now on. Should we one day eliminate the contribution limits for federal candidates (Rep. John Doolittle got about 130 votes to do so a couple of years ago), a reasonable Libertarian Party could be a force to be reckoned with. And, of course, the Internet offers a host of possibilities, as we are able to communicate with each other on a massive scale and circumvent the machinations of the state in more and more ways as time goes on.

At the policy level, issues like Social Security privatization, school choice, radical tax reform, and an end to the War on Drugs have more popular support today than they did in 1972, when the LP was founded. Each of those proposals, should they come to pass, also possesses ancillary benefits that will change the dynamics of our society in favor of more liberty. Whether the prospects for liberty look promising or not, we each have a moral obligation to fight to advance its cause. Let a thousand flowers bloom. □

Learning from Defeat, and from Victory

by Stephen Cox

I have been a libertarian for many years. I have written for many years in support of libertarian causes. I have spent a large part of my life investigating the history of libertarianism. My party registry is Libertarian.

Honesty, however, now constrains me to admit that the

Libertarian Party has had its day. For the benefit of liberty, the LP should yield to more effective means of political action.

In American history, only one third party — the GOP — has ever succeeded in becoming a permanent major party. It was able to do so because one of the two major parties of the time, the Whigs, collapsed under the impact of the slavery controversy, and because the new third party included large numbers of officeholders and other government officials who had defected from existing parties. The nascent GOP immediately attracted masses of voters among Northern populations. It ruled the nation during most of the succeeding hundred years.

No other third party ever gained and kept the strength of a major party. In 1912, Theodore Roosevelt's Progressive Party attracted enormous support from voters and very significant support from officeholders and other sources of influence, and it won electoral votes. Yet it died when former President Roosevelt returned to his Republican Party roots. In 1924, Senator Robert La Follette's Progressive Party, which had the backing of the AFL and other union and leftist forces, won 17% of the popular vote and a larger vote total

But the Libertarian Party has also done its share of harm. Let's be honest with ourselves. In an election in which either the Republican or the Democrat is bound to win, you cannot make a choice to hurt the Republican Party without helping the Democratic Party.

than Roosevelt's Progressives had achieved in 1912. It carried La Follette's home state of Wisconsin. But it failed to institutionalize itself at the national level. In 1948, Henry Wallace's Progressive Party — its standard-bearer a recent Vice President of the United States — attracted support from many voters and from a handful of officeholders on the left wing of the New Deal coalition. But it failed to win any electoral votes and died ignominiously after the next election cycle.

The Libertarian Party has never enjoyed the advantages of either the nascent Republican Party or those three Progressive parties. The highest office-holder it has ever attracted was former Republican Congressman Ron Paul, who was its candidate for president in 1988. Ron received 432,000 votes; he then returned to the Republican Party and to his post in Congress. The Libertarian Party has never attracted any kind of mass support. It won its highest presidential vote in the election of 1980, when Ed Clark received almost a million votes.

In 1996, presidential candidate Harry Browne received just 486,000 votes in an election in which Bill Clinton was bound to win and in which there was, accordingly, little practical reason not to vote for a minor-party candidate. This

year, Harry was again the presidential candidate. Like Ron and Ed, he was an exemplary spokesman for libertarian ideas, but he received fewer than 400,000 votes.

I hope that libertarians are capable of learning from experience, because the results of our experience with electoral politics are now conclusive.

It may be argued, of course, that Libertarian Party campaigns have an educational function. They draw attention to libertarian ideas that those ideas would otherwise not receive. The Party is advertised on ballots across the nation, and it gets a certain amount of free television coverage simply because it is a party. This is true, but it is true in the most minimal way. I am a restless sampler of television and newspapers, and this year I saw Harry Browne precisely twice on television — once in a debate with other third-party candidates, a debate that was watched by possibly a million people, and once in a (clever) campaign-sponsored advertisement on cable TV. That's it. Period. Some education of the voting public.

Now, what is given in exchange for this educational effect? Millions of dollars in donations to the party. Millions of hours expended by talented and devoted people on ballot access, party organization, intraparty disputes, publication of literature that only libertarians read, and so forth. Is the effect worth the effort? Obviously not.

Of course, there are ancillary benefits. The Libertarian Party provides its adherents with valuable social benefits. It acquaints isolated individuals with like-minded people. It affirms their convictions; it gives them a limited but often gratifying medium of self-expression. In some localities, party people have struck important blows for liberty. The Libertarian Party in my homeland, San Diego County, went to court to fight an illegal tax and succeeded in returning scores of millions of dollars to beleaguered citizens. Accomplishments like this make me proud; association with people who do such things gives me a homeland that is more than geographical.

But the Libertarian Party has also done its share of harm. Let's be honest with ourselves. There is no political free lunch. In an election in which either the Republican or the Democrat is bound to win, you cannot make a choice to hurt the Republican Party without helping the Democratic Party. In the absence of an LP, some of its votes would go to the Republican candidate. If Harry Browne's candidacy had not existed, a tiny fraction of his 16,415 votes in the state of Florida would have given Republican candidate Bush enough votes to win a first-night victory. In some states and districts, Libertarian votes would have made the difference between victory and defeat for Republican congressional candidates.

Now, it is perfectly true that the Republican Party stands for a good many things that libertarians abhor. It also stands for a good many things that libertarians endorse. In almost every case, the former are things that the Democratic Party also stands for, and the latter are things that the Democratic Party fanatically opposes: tax relief, Social Security reform, strict construction, limited government. Libertarian Party votes have not denied the Republicans and Democrats the ability to work evil, but they have helped to cripple the

Libertarian Activism: Time for a Change?

Republican Party's ability to do good.

Think about that the next time a Democrat-appointed court takes away another fundamental liberty. Think about that the next time a Democrat-appointed official raises taxes, imposes racial quotas, deforms education for political purposes, dooms an innocent child to life in a communist hell, or incinerates men, women, and children because of a difference in religious sympathies. Think about that the next time you become enraged at the distortions of American ideas that gush from every orifice of the Democrat-dominated political class. Could you have done anything to stop that? Could you have done anything to make your libertarian views effective?

It's time to face these questions, and not to keep evading our responsibility for whatever practical impact we have on the world. Please don't keep saying that a vote for the Libertarian Party is a vote for conscience. If conscience leads you to seek some influence on national affairs, a vote for the Libertarian Party will not accomplish that purpose. Your vote will have the same effect on the political system as if you had not voted. The only difference is that your vote will encourage other good people to invest their time and energy in maintaining a party that, as a party, is little more than a vehicle for not voting.

The problem, then, is how to keep the advantages of the Libertarian Party while reducing its disadvantages to a minimum. Must we have a party, or can we replace it with something better?

I agree with Randal O'Toole's suggestion. I believe that the appropriate model for libertarian political action is not a party like that of the Democrats and Republicans, but a political group like the National Rifle Association, People for the American Way, Common Cause, the NAACP, NOW, and the Sierra Club (the organization that O'Toole specifically cites).

We should speak out on local, state, and national issues — just as, say, the Sierra Club constantly and effectively does — before church groups, service organizations, city councils, and legislatures across the land.

Organizations of that kind spend no money at all on ballot access or electoral campaigns, but they have immense political influence. They hold meetings; they agitate and propagandize; their adherents take action on state, local, and national issues; they bring like-minded people together and inspire them to keep the faith. They just don't focus their attention on doomed candidacies for public office.

Avoiding that temptation is a big advantage in the public-influence department. Opinions advanced by party politicians are routinely discounted; opinions advanced by politicians from parties that don't have a chance to win are contemptuously discounted; but opinions of "non-partisan" groups are often eagerly solicited by media hungry for opin-

ion. Here's another good thing: spokesmen for Second Amendment rights or freedom in the use of drugs don't have to parry questions about the rest of a party platform; they can focus on the issues at hand. A variety of libertarian organizations, or a central organization with a variety of sympathetic affiliates, would give libertarian activists the flexibility they need.

I'm not suggesting the formation of another libertarian think tank like the admirable Cato Institute, Institute for Humane Studies, or Foundation for Economic Education.

We should combat threats to liberty when they arise, rather than waiting for the occasional television opportunity every two or four years.

These institutes exist to promote research and its dissemination. They do a good job, and they should keep doing it. Those of us who are not scholars of public policy have something else to do. We can form non-party organizations that can speak as no party can.

They can speak out on local, state, and national issues — just as, say, the Sierra Club constantly and effectively does — before church groups, service organizations, city councils, and legislatures across the land. They can combat threats to liberty when they arise, rather than waiting for the occasional television opportunity every two or four years. They can enlist the help of like-minded Republicans and Democrats on a multitude of political issues. Above all, they can speak with the moral authority that no political party has and with the popular voice that no think tank can develop. Above all, they can take the energy needlessly expended on ballot-access campaigns and electoral propaganda and channel it into direct influence on public opinion.

You can call such an organization the Citizens for Individual Liberty. You can call it the Organization for American Liberty. You can call it the Council on Political Reform. You can call it anything you want. Form such an organization, and you can put me down for active support. I'll bet that most libertarians will say the same thing.

Do you have a passion for liberty? Do you have organizational skill? This is your chance. Do it now. □

No Magic Bullet

by Manuel S. Klausner

In the struggle for liberty, there are many tactics that can be effective, but there's no magic bullet that yields quick short-term results. Without a paradigm of liberty, the cause of liberty remains fragile. The forces of statism are powerful and resolute. Merely to slow down the growth of big government is, in itself, a necessary, but not sufficient, goal.

In our struggle, the influence of think tanks, such as Cato and Reason, and of journals and magazines, such as *Reason*,

has been significant. Professional organizations, such as the Federalist Society, have had a far-reaching effect.

The impact of libertarian scholars and professors has been vast. And the power of libertarian judges can be awesome.

Electoral politics is not an easy arena for achieving liberty. I am a strong proponent of the initiative process, which can achieve results not readily attainable through legislative action. In 1978, in California, Proposition 13 helped usher in a nationwide tax-limitation movement. In 1996, Proposition 209, the California Civil Rights Initiative, banned governmental preferences based on race and sex.

On balance, I believe that the LP is a worthwhile effort. Its success cannot be measured by the votes its candidates receive. It is unrealistic to expect *any* ideological candidate to get a significant number of votes in the United States.

Particularly in close elections, it is difficult even for pro-liberty voters to seriously consider voting for a third-party candidate. We saw this in November, when Harry Browne did less well than in 1996, at the same time that many Nader supporters ended up voting for Gore.

But we should remember that, as Milton Friedman has written, the Socialist Party never elected anyone to national office in the U.S. — yet it succeeded in having much of its platform supported by both major parties and ultimately enacted into law.

The case for liberty is a difficult one to make, particularly among voters who are ill-informed about issues and ignorant about economics and political theory. Even without the active opposition of special interests, the dumbing down of public schools makes the task of selling a philosophy that the government should stay out of people's lives and their pocketbooks a very tough sell to a mass audience.

Selling hamburgers at McDonald's is inherently a much bigger business than Daniel or Jean-Louis or any high-end restaurant. The market for libertarian voters is limited, just as is the television audience for Shakespeare, as compared with Jeopardy.

Even if the LP ran a candidate for president as attractive as Larry Elder, the articulate Los Angeles-based talk-show host; or Gary Johnson, the courageous and personable governor of New Mexico, it is unlikely that they would fare much better in terms of percentage of votes cast than Ralph Nader or Pat Buchanan. But they have the potential to change voters' attitudes on issues, even if they don't get a lot of votes.

The LP should primarily focus on getting good candidates to campaign for local offices. This will lead to more LP office-holders and more media coverage. As to national and statewide offices, the most realistic goal is not to elect candidates, but, rather, to help transform the debate by running articulate candidates. A key objective is for LP candidates to obtain a place alongside other candidates in public debates.

One of the most important tasks for the LP is to continue to campaign against the War on Drugs. The drug war is nothing less than a counterproductive war on people — yet it is widely supported by politicians of every stripe.

The need for a political alternative to current drug policy is, for me, a sufficient reason to remain supportive of the LP.

The LP can also be effective in its panels and debates at state and national conventions by bringing in diverse speakers and exposing conventioners to an informed case for liberty.

But the LP's not the only game in town for libertarians interested in political activity. I encourage libertarians who prefer to work within the two major parties to continue their efforts. The best Republicans are libertarians. It is important

The market for libertarian voters is limited, just as is the television audience for Shakespeare, as compared with Jeopardy.

for libertarians to help influence the Republican Party to support the values of protecting freedom and free enterprise.

A current example of this approach is Gale Norton, formerly a member of the LP, whose strong commitment to property rights has led to her nomination (and hopefully confirmation) as Secretary of the Interior.

For the time being, the Democratic Party is a rather hostile environment for libertarian activists. Rich Dennis is an example of a supporter of libertarian causes, such as decriminalizing drugs, who has had an impact in the Democratic Party.

We are fortunate to have a set of institutions in America that were designed to protect liberty. But there is no way to maintain freedom if people don't cherish it. Education is a primary role for the LP. Above all, the LP should hold high the banner of liberty and not water its message down in a vain effort to achieve electoral victory. □

Overcoming Obstacles — I doubt that another presidential candidate or strategy would be able to improve significantly on the LP's 2000 election results. I believe there are much bigger variables at work.

First, of course, are the barriers to political competition erected by the major parties. These barriers will always make it difficult for minor parties to become major.

Second, major parties have a very large established following, which means that candidates don't have to spend scarce media time explaining what their party is. Everybody has heard of Republicans and Democrats. Republicans and Democrats are already in the debates. Moreover, major party candidates start out with an existing cadre. The National Federation of Republican Women's Clubs' website claims they have over 100,000 members. Similarly, the College Republican National Committee claims to be the largest student political organization in the country, also with 100,000 members. Then there's the Young Republican National Federation for those between 18 and 40, undoubtedly with tens of thousands more members. There are large Republican donor lists. While most of these people aren't hardcore libertarians, there is widespread Republican support for enough libertarian positions (only a few are needed in a campaign) to

give a libertarian candidate running room.

Third, particularly as an election approaches, there's a tendency for the Democratic presidential candidate to loom as a bigger and bigger threat, the worse of the two major-party candidates. The most popular talk-radio hosts certainly promote this view. I know friends of liberty who concluded that the top priority was to defeat the sicko-wacko Gore, and the Republican was the best bet to do it. Although Bill Bradford raises good questions when comparing 2000 LP vote totals with 1996, where the winner's margin was much greater, I think the tendency to focus on the Democrat means "make a statement" candidates will continue competing for a small share of the electorate.

Fourth, voters don't seem to take seriously a presidential candidate untested in a major office such as state governor or U.S. senator. It isn't enough to effectively articulate a vision for the presidency. Voters want a candidate with demonstrated staying power, somebody who can handle the pressures and complexities of government, and who has emerged as reasonably clean after attacks from opponents and the press. Hence, though Ross Perot and Steve Forbes were much better-known and better-financed than Harry Browne, they never had a believable chance to become president.

Despite all the obstacles it faces, the LP might be able to break new ground by focusing on electing libertarian mayors or state legislators, since these ought to be good prospects for governor, and electing congressmen, because such libertarians would be good prospects for U.S. senator and eventually for the presidency. There ought to be a place for a more focused LP because, as Antony Fisher emphasized, liberty is more likely to flourish if there are many voices. — Jim Powell

End the Kleptocracy — The Browne campaign gave us Debacle 2000. In its last days, it spent more than \$60,000 on staff, more than \$60,000 on hotels, more than \$30,000 for video production, and almost nothing on advertising.

I am not blaming Harry Browne. He ran exactly the campaign he promised to run. He told us what he would do, he did it, and he was honest and up-front about it.

Libertarians are fond of talking about privatization of government services. Harry Browne did what many Libertarians thought impossible. His campaign proved you can privatize a form of government, giving us that government's services without force or fraud.

Unfortunately, the form of government the Browne campaign privatized is the kleptocracy.

In an African kleptocracy, taxes are extorted, the well connected get money, the secret police silence critics, the laboring masses get bread and circuses, and the Foreign Legion gets to keep them in place. The establishment supports the President for Life, and the President for Life supports the establishment. Alas, the government does not govern. African kleptocracies are perfectly legal. After all, when you're President for Life, you write the law.

In a Libertarian kleptocracy, no force or fraud occurs. The donors voluntarily give money, the staff is well paid, the "Shut the F--- Up" campaign tries to hush critics, the libertarian masses get "campaign" events at posh hotels, and the party establishment works the delegates. One thing the cam-

paign does not do is actually campaign, at least not the way most real campaigns do. Kleptocratic campaigns are totally legal, 100% protected by the First Amendment. No force was initiated.

However, the national Libertarian Party has a basic problem. The party establishment supported the candidate, knowing full well from the past the style of campaign Browne would run. All legal. All open and above board. All guaranteeing more years of failure.

If you had no better alternative, you could say Debacle 2000 was better than nothing. But there is a choice. An effective choice. A libertarian choice.

That choice is the Local Organization Strategy, with proper roles for local, state, and national organizations. What does this strategy involve?

1. Vote with your wallet!

The party establishment didn't get any smarter on Election Day. Give them your money, and they'll spend it like last time. If you like what they're doing, great. Just keep giving! Otherwise, stop donating to the national party. Give to libertarian party groups that support local organizations.

2. Out with the Libertarian kleptocrats!

Bumper Hornberger gave fair — but too shrill — warnings. The people who refused to listen, the people who gave us Browne 2000 and the "Shut the F--- Up!" campaign, have

In a Libertarian kleptocracy, no force or fraud occurs. The donors voluntarily give money, the staff is well paid, and the libertarian masses get "campaign" events at posh hotels.

now had their final exam. They flunked big-time. They gave us Debacle 2000. Send them packing. At the next national LP convention, elect an all-new slate of national officers.

3. Fix your state party!

If your state party is run by the establishment people who gave us Debacle 2000, be a good neighbor. Clean up your backyard.

4. Put the better strategy in place.

Talk globally. Work locally. You may have to wait to reform the national party. Don't wait to build your local party! Don't wait to build and reform your state party! Build the local organization strategy in your own town, county, and state. Run candidates! Develop activist cadres! And tell your fellow Libertarians what you've learned, so they can try your ideas, too!

— George Phillips

Many Paths to Liberty — After reading "Libertarian Activism: Time for a Change?" I have concluded that *you are all correct*. Unlike socialism, the quest for liberty is not centrally planned. There is no one right way.

If you think presidential races are important, support them. If you think congressional races are the way to go, get involved. If your thing is local politics, go to your city council meeting and speak out. Single issue voters, find a club. Can't? Start one. You would be amazed at what three or four people

can do if they try.

Don't waste too much of your time telling other libertarian activists that they are wrong. Save that for the statist; they are the real enemy. And remember that you don't promote liberty by reading about it in books, magazines, or endless e-mail list serves. You can promote liberty by writing about it, but only if it motivates somebody else to action.

Finally don't tell me that Harry Browne and the LP haven't made a difference. Harry's '96 campaign motivated me and thousands of others to get involved. In 2000, I led the East Bay LP's dozen volunteers, working with an even smaller local Tri-Partisan Taxpayers Association, as the primary opposition to a 96 million dollar sales tax increase, which was defeated by 2,000 votes out of 400,000 cast. We were the difference, and Harry shares that victory every bit as much as we.

— Scott A. Wilson

Politics Is About Winning Elections —

For many, the political-party question is between the Libertarians and the Republicans. One side says the Republicans are impossibly non-libertarian, therefore support the Libertarians; the other side says the Libertarian Party will never win elections, therefore support the Republicans. Both arguments have the same structure: Not A, therefore B. But B has to be justified on its own merits.

I want to make the positive argument for the Republicans. First, the purpose of a political party is to exercise power by electing people to public office. During the past 30 years, elected officials have deregulated airlines, trucking, banking, and telephones, cut marginal tax rates, devolved federal welfare, freed up trade with Canada and Mexico, put judges on the Supreme Court who have restored federalism, enabled homeschooling and charter schools, and proposed the idea of personal investment accounts within Social Security. None of this was done by elected Libertarians, because there weren't any. More was done by Democrats than by Libertarians, but most was done by Republicans.

Republicans are a big-tent party. By gaining the possibility of electing people to office, you give up the possibility of ideological purity. To give that up is necessary. If you are not willing to do that, you are not being serious.

Your objective cannot be to capture the party and drive everybody else out. That's not a reasonable objective. A reasonable objective is to become strong enough to veto candidates and policies that are particularly bad, and to begin nominating and electing some candidates who are publicly identified as libertarians. These will not be die-hard libertarians, to be sure, but electable politicians who will vote against war in Kosovo and Colombia and against censoring the Net, and for cuts in taxes and regulation, and who will support these positions by making arguments about the Constitution, and about treating citizens like self-responsible adults.

By voting Libertarian, you actually retard such an outcome by splitting the anti-state vote and electing Democrats. An example in my state was the defeat of Sen. Slade Gorton, who, while no libertarian, was an economic conservative and a vocal opponent of the war against Serbia and of aid to Colombia. The Libertarian candidate made the difference in Gorton's defeat, and led to the 50-50 division of the U.S.

Senate.

If the thought of working with others who disagree with you on some important issues makes you sick, you don't belong in a political party. But political parties are only part of politics, and politics is only a part of social change. If you don't want to get involved in one of the two serious political parties, get involved with Cato or CEI or PERC or the Institute for Justice or *Liberty* magazine or some other private effort. Start a school. Write a book. Get a law degree and sue the bastards. Do something useful.

Randal O'Toole makes the interesting suggestion that one useful thing would be for the LP to remake itself as something like the Sierra Club. Such a club could be involved in statewide initiative campaigns, such as medical marijuana, asset-forfeiture reform, tax cuts, vouchers, homeschooling. It

If the thought of working with others who disagree with you on some important issues makes you sick, you don't belong in a political party.

could endorse candidates, and even run independent ads for them. It could support libertarian-leaning Republicans in the same way the Sierra Club is close to favored Democrats, while remaining independent and critical. The Liberty Club could remain just as much a money-raising machine as the LP is now, keeping Steve Dasbach in steak and onions, while actually getting something done.

I think if libertarians followed O'Toole's advice, they would find a much stronger welcome among the 16% of Americans who, according to Rasmussen Research, lean libertarian. Signing on to being a libertarian would no longer mean wasting one's vote. And just think of the amount of libertarian money now contributed to governments in ballot-access fees that could be freed up to spend on something that actually deserved it.

— Bruce Ramsey

Two Observations — I have two observations on the other contributions to the first installment of *Liberty's* symposium on libertarian activism.

Randal O'Toole's piece was considerably off-target, as the reason for the environmental movement's success is that it plays right into the hands of the big-government crowd and their media allies. It won't make any difference whether we present our ideas as a party, a club, a think-tank or a church. The elitist control-freaks will still oppose those ideas.

What Jane Shaw said about the lure of politics was insightful, and Bruce Bartlett's observations about structural obstacles and possible solutions are thought-provoking, but their notion that the GOP offers any real hope for liberty is an illusion. The two major parties have achieved their goal of finding a "third way" between capitalism and communism; it's called fascism. And while the Repo version may be slightly less awful than the Demo version, the idea that the Republican party has any serious commitment to liberty is ludicrous. And I see no likelihood that we can change that by injecting a few thousand libertarians into a party that's roughly a hundred times that size.

— David F. Nolan

It Seemed Like a Good Idea at the Time

by R. W. Bradford

A few months ago, I received a letter from a young man asking me why I support the Libertarian Party. It occurred to me that my answer had something to say about several issues raised in Liberty's ongoing symposium on libertarian activism. Here I reproduce his letter, along with my answer, slightly edited and expanded.

— R. W. Bradford

Dear Bill,

I don't understand why you support the Libertarian Party. It is utterly ineffective, a waste of time, and made up mostly of people with a simplistic, even childish, understanding of liberty. By your own admission, the LP has wasted millions of dollars and tens of thousands of hours of volunteer effort in its futile pursuit of winning elections.

Isn't it time for libertarians to abandon the LP? Why do you even bother to cover the LP in *Liberty*? Giving the LP publicity in your pages — and taking it seriously — gives the LP credibility that it does not deserve. Other libertarian magazines like *Reason* or *Ideas on Liberty* never mention the LP, let alone give its convention and its pathetic electoral showing pages and pages of coverage.

Sincerely,
Michael Martin

Dear Michael,

You point out that the LP is "utterly ineffective, a waste of time." And you are perplexed at my continued affection for it, my support of its candidates, and my membership in it. Why, you wonder, is a smart guy like me involved with the LP?

I understand your perplexity. I confess that the LP has been ineffective, though I'd quibble with your claim that it is a waste of time. And I do indeed "take it seriously."

In retrospect, I realize that if the money and time invested in the LP had been invested elsewhere, it might have been more effective. Yes, I know, spending a million dollars to obtain ballot status is not the best investment in the world. Running nearly invisible campaigns is no way to change the world for the better. Nor is replacing a wimpy Republican senator like Slade Gorton with a doctrinaire leftist like Maria Cantwell, which is what LP votes did in the state of Washington last November.

But hindsight is always so much better than foresight, isn't it? Every mutual fund prospectus warns that "past performance is no guarantee of future performance." Some investments inevitably pay off better than others. If each of us had invested every dollar we could lay our hands on in Microsoft 15 years ago, and liquidated it all early this year, we'd all be rich, rich, rich! But 15 years ago, few of us knew that Microsoft was on

the verge of making billions in profits; to me, and to most investors, it was another software company.

The same holds true for those investing in a more libertarian future. You look out at the world and try to figure out what investment will have the best payoff. If you're prudent, you'll want to hedge your bets by diversifying into a number of different propositions. You pay your money and you take your chances.

I have been an investor in the LP since shortly after it was organized in 1971. My investments have ebbed and flowed as my perception of its chances of success have ebbed and flowed. I have invested thousands of dollars and hundreds of hours working for LP candidates, who, I thought, might

If you want to understand why I have supported the LP, you have to understand what the world was like in 1972 and how it has changed since.

have some chance of making a difference. Those investments haven't paid off as well as I wished, just as some of my financial investments haven't.

If you want to understand why I have supported and voted for every LP candidate on the ballot in any election in which I've ever voted — and why I am a proud member of the Libertarian Party — you have to understand what the world was like in 1972 and how it has changed since.

Richard Nixon was elected president in 1968. The Vietnam War was at its height, military conscription was an institution, taxes were at record levels, and inflation was starting to act up. Rioting students were taking over campuses, and rioting blacks (as African-Americans then preferred to be called) burning American cities.

Nixon ran for president in 1968 on a platform of cutting taxes, ending the war, and abolishing the draft. Among his top advisors were Alan Greenspan, an economist and member of Ayn Rand's "inner circle," and Martin Anderson, also an associate of Rand's, and the nation's most prominent critic of conscription and urban renewal.

"Urban renewal," for those who are blissfully unfamiliar with the term, was a federal program to finance local use of eminent domain to "renew" our cities. Ostensibly, its purpose was to upgrade housing and neighborhoods. In 1962, the publication of Anderson's *The Federal Bulldozer* pretty much devastated the program, which by then had been in place for 14 years, and was a primary source of moolah for urban politicians and their brothers-in-law. In *Bulldozer*, Anderson showed that the program had destroyed more homes than it had built and had done a number of other ugly and ridiculous things. *Bulldozer's* effect was devastating; we have hardly heard of urban renewal since, though the idea still crops up under other names.

I turned 21 a couple of months before the 1968 election. Voting for Nixon was an easy choice. It would be a better world with Nixon in the White House, getting advice from Greenspan and Anderson. But once ensconced there, Nixon

proceeded to continue the war, the draft, and the expansion of state power. War-time taxes and huge deficits — not to mention the humiliation of being unable to win such a little war — resulted in a sad economy and growing inflation.

On August 15, 1971, Nixon made a politically astute and economically disastrous move. He commandeered the airwaves and announced that he was about to take decisive action to fight inflation and stimulate the economy: he was instituting a freeze on wages and prices.

Inflation, or a general increase in prices, results from increasing the money supply artificially. This particular inflation resulted from the creation of new paper money to pay for the huge increase in government spending on welfare, the work of Lyndon B. Johnson's "Great Society," and the war in Vietnam. It wasn't the first time the United States had suffered from inflation. The U.S. had abandoned silver and gold currency during the Civil War so that the government could issue large quantities of paper money to pay for the war without raising taxes too much, and the cost of living more than doubled. Similar monetary expansion to pay for World War II without raising taxes too uncomfortably had a similar effect, which the government attempted to mitigate by instituting rationing and price freezes.

Simple economics demonstrated the futility of price controls. If demand is high enough that a product can sell for \$200, making it illegal to sell the product for more than \$100 means that some people who want to purchase it will not be allowed to do so. It provides incentives for some buyers to offer "bribes" to sellers to sell to them rather than to others. Inevitably, some sort of rationing system has to be imposed, to spread the shortages around and keep prices low. Producers then have little incentive to increase production or to produce more efficiently. Consumers have money but cannot buy anything they want with it. The ultimate result of price fixing is rationing, decreasing production, and economic malaise.

Nixon was well aware of all this. In *Six Crises*, a memoir of his political career written after he lost the 1960 presidential election, he wrote eloquently about the futility of price controls. Not only did he understand why controls couldn't work, but he had actual experience with the Kafkaesque world of trying to enforce them during World War II.

Nixon's move was cynically manipulative. He believed, correctly, that most people were anxious for "decisive action," and would respond favorably to wage-price controls. The horizon of his world, like that of any politician, was the next election, then only 15 months away. All he needed was for the favorable response to his decisive action to last 15 months.

In the long run, the freeze was disastrous for the stock market. Business is crippled in a controlled economy, profits inevitably fall, and when profits fall, stock prices follow. The freeze also meant that commodity prices would inevitably rise, driving the inflation rate up even faster, because pent-up demand will ultimately prevail unless the market economy is destroyed completely.

What were libertarians up to, while all this was going on?

Prior to the 1960s, most libertarians saw themselves as part of the political right, which was not at that time so infused with religious and authoritarian beliefs as it is today. There were cult-like groups centered around Robert LeFevre,

Ayn Rand, and Murray Rothbard, but they were very small. Rand's was the largest, numbering in the thousands, after its launch by her protégé. Nathaniel Branden in 1958, shortly after publication of her bestselling novel, *Atlas Shrugged*, which made a powerful moralistic argument for liberty. But Rand considered herself a "new intellectual" rather above politics. Robert LeFevre had operated a libertarian summer camp in Colorado for several years and found converts to his rather peculiar pacifist version of libertarianism, which held that defending oneself with more energy than was expended against one constituted aggression, and condemned all forms of political activity as immoral. Rothbard, who would eventually become very influential among libertarians, headed a very small group — fewer than a dozen, by most accounts — who accepted his amalgam of Austrian economics, Randian rights theory, nineteenth-century individualist anarchism, and anti-American foreign policy, which led Rothbard to support a bewildering varray of presidential candidates: Strom Thurmond in 1948, Adlai Stevenson in 1952, anti-income-tax activist T. Coleman Andrews in 1956, Stevenson again in 1960.

But most libertarians were not part of any of these cult-like groups. Most identified themselves as Republicans to the extent they identified themselves with any political party. This made a certain amount of sense. In those days, the GOP paid far more attention to libertarian concerns than it has in the past few decades: Walter Judd's keynote at the 1960 Republican nominating convention was as radical a libertarian statement as any speech I can recall coming from Harry Browne, the LP candidate in the past two presidential elections.

In general, libertarians perceived themselves as a subset of the conservative movement, which captured the GOP in 1964. On virtually all issues but national defense, Goldwater advocated a more-or-less libertarian position. He was radical enough to get Ayn Rand's enthusiastic endorsement. Many

Libertarians had grown more radical during the 1960s, as they explored the implications of Rand's theory of rights and were influenced by a strongly radicalized left.

libertarians of my generation — including me — cut their political teeth working on the Goldwater campaign.

Goldwater lost in a landslide so devastating that many political observers believed the GOP would simply cease to exist. The Democrats, who had controlled both houses of Congress for a decade, captured majorities so large that they could simply ignore opposition from the Republicans and enact whatever the left-liberal leadership of the party wanted. The Republican Party, for its part, scurried to the brainless center.

Libertarians were, naturally, wary of this move. And the number of them was growing, mostly because of the continuing and immense popularity of Ayn Rand's novels. As an atheist who had generally been spurned in her earlier political activity among conservatives, Rand didn't like conserva-

tives very well and she repeatedly argued that her philosophy was far from conservative. But like most libertarians, she had supported Nixon in 1968, presumably because her acolyte Greenspan was among his advisors.

With the exception of Rand, virtually all libertarians who had supported Nixon felt profoundly betrayed. It was not merely his betrayal on price controls, conscription, and the war. Libertarians had grown more radical during the 1960s, as they explored the implications of Rand's theory of rights and were influenced by a strongly radicalized left. Young

It was time to form our own party, to raise our own banner, to tell the world what we believed, to present our moral vision of a better world.

libertarians — and most libertarians at that time were young and male — were no more enthusiastic than other young men about the prospect of being hauled off to Vietnam as cannon fodder. They were particularly animated by the issue of military conscription. There had been serious disputes with conservatives, and many libertarians were beginning to be alienated from conservatism.

When, in December 1971, David Nolan called together a handful of libertarians to consider forming a new political party, the situation seemed desperate. I couldn't attend the meeting in Nolan's living room or the national convention that nominated philosopher John Hospers as the new Libertarian Party's presidential candidate. But I did attend a meeting in Detroit to organize the Libertarian Party of Michigan, and I vividly remember the revolutionary mood of the group. We were young, radical, and full of piss and vinegar. Our candidates might not win elections, but they could be an important step toward the "moral revolution" that Rand had talked about. Besides, there was no way on earth we could support Nixon or his moronic Democratic opponent, George McGovern, an outright socialist. The Republicans didn't want us and we didn't want them. The Democrats were even less hospitable.

It was time to form our own party, to raise our own banner, to tell the world what we believed, to present our moral vision of a better world.

You, Michael, are living in a very different world. Most of your life has been lived after the fall of communism, in a world where libertarian thinking is quite respectable, where most conservatives and many on the left will take your arguments seriously. You've never faced a world dominated by socialist thinking, a world that won't even consider your arguments. You've never felt the need to be so profoundly radical as we were.

In the three decades since we formed the Libertarian Party, the world has changed a lot, partly because of what we've done as individuals — we've become professors, teachers, journalists, scientists, novelists, entrepreneurs; we've advocated libertarian notions and promoted them in the marketplace of ideas to a point where to be a libertarian need not mean being an irrelevant outsider.

The Libertarian Party also played a role. It got serious publicity in 1972, when a Virginia Republican, Roger MacBride, cast an electoral vote for John Hospers. It got more visibility in 1976, when MacBride won the nomination and the party managed to get on the ballot in 37 states and capture 176,000 votes. It became even more visible in 1980, when a wealthy individual agreed to accept second place on a ticket headed by Ed Clark so that he could legally donate several million dollars, which the campaign invested in dozens of five-minute spots on network television. That year, the LP got nearly a million votes. Its future looked bright.

Its future has dimmed considerably since then. A bitterly split convention in 1983 saw nearly half the party leave, and left the LP unable to mount more than a token presidential campaign. Things looked up in 1988, when former congressman Ron Paul won the nomination, but the vote total failed to reach half the level of 1980. In 1992, the presidential effort was a pathetic parody of a political campaign, and the vote total fell to below 300,000. In 1996, hopes again rose, thanks to the nomination of Harry Browne, a former best-selling author and a skilled speaker, and a strategy of exploiting the new media of talk-radio and the Internet. But the vote total again failed to reach half the 1980 total. Last year, the party again nominated Browne, who proposed to repeat the failed strategy of 1996. Not surprisingly, the results were even more disappointing.

Since 1980, the LP has had little impact on American politics. But it has advanced the cause of freedom in some significant ways. It has won a few elections and has even been responsible for some real reductions in government power,

Libertarians have abandoned the notion that the LP may have a real impact on American public life, but they continue to value it as a social institution.

for example, a rollback of a southern California sales tax. And it has continued to attract new people to what we can now accurately call the libertarian movement.

Yes, the successes have been few and the costs have been high. But individual investors — in this case, individual libertarians — direct their own investments by reference to the outcomes they anticipate. Between 1972 and 1980, investments in the LP paid off very well. Since 1980, they have not.

Despite the manifest failure of recent investments, people continue to donate substantial sums of money and volunteer work to the LP and its candidates. In fact, more money was donated to the LP for the 2000 campaign than for any previous campaign.

There are some very good reasons for the LP's continued existence:

1) People have an inherent tendency to continue to invest in propositions that paid off in the past. It is easy to see the LP's failures since 1980 as temporary setbacks. This was the rationale behind my own investments in the 1988 and 1996 presidential campaigns.

2) Writing off a losing investment is a painful experience that forces one to admit that he was wrong. A lot of libertarians have a lot invested in the LP. Giving up on it means admitting it was a mistake.

3) The LP and its candidates have become quite expert at portraying the prospects of the LP as much better than they are. Anyone who has received a direct mail solicitation from the LP knows just how rosy a picture the fundraisers can paint, if only you'll invest one more time, we can make a breakthrough . . .

4) Many LP supporters and activists are seeking goals other than impact on the political process. For them, the LP is more a social organization than a political party. Like a fringe church, the LP provides a place where libertarians can socialize with people like themselves, proselytize non-believers, and share a feeling of moral superiority. Contesting elections takes on a ritualistic flavor: candidates and volunteers realize that their quest is futile, but their mere activity makes them feel virtuous. In addition, the LP also offers a chance for political victory that would be hard to achieve in other spheres: it's much easier to win an LP nomination or election to an important party post than it is to win such things in a major political party.

Financial support for the LP has also grown as the disposable income of its members has grown. LP members are older and more prosperous; so is their party.

Still, one has to wonder what would have happened if the LP had never been organized. How would things be different? Would we live in a freer world?

It's impossible to know for sure, but it seems very likely that if libertarians had continued to be involved in other forms of activism they would have been much more successful. Consider, for example, how the Republican Party might have developed if libertarians had not abandoned it.

During the 1950s and 1960s, the GOP included a substantial libertarian element, represented by figures like Barry Goldwater. Young Republican organizations across the country were explicitly libertarian. Sure, there were other elements within the GOP, two of them hostile to substantial parts of the libertarian agenda. Main Street Republicans generally favored business subsidies and were willing to support some elements of the welfare state. And fundamentalist Christian Republicans generally opposed the libertarian social agenda. Most Republicans, horrible to say, favored military conscription as a necessary device for keeping the Soviet Union from conquering the world. But libertarian ideas were always present, always an important factor.

After libertarians abandoned the GOP in the early 1970s, the Republican Party moved farther and farther away from the libertarian agenda. Fundamentalist Christians became more active within the GOP, and libertarian rhetoric (and policy) within the Republican Party was partially displaced by the religious right rhetoric and social policies.

Today there are 20,000 to 30,000 activists in the Libertarian Party. If they were involved in the GOP, they would be an important counterbalance to the far right. The Republican platform would be a far more libertarian document. Libertarians would be winning nominations, helping to write the party platform, holding positions of influence within the party, and winning elections.

Of course, people involved in an open party like the GOP

would also lose nominations, fail to get some of their views adopted into the platform, and lose races for party positions and elective office. It would be frustrating at times. But there's little doubt that the GOP — and the nation — would have moved in a more libertarian direction.

Does this mean that the LP should never have been started? If I were God and could have known in 1971 that the LP would fail even as libertarianism prospered and that its development might actually hinder the spread of libertarian ideas and the implementation of libertarian policy, I wouldn't have become involved. But, as I am sure you real-

One has to wonder what would have happened if the LP had never been organized. How would things be different? Would we live in a freer world?

ize, I was not God in 1971; I could not foresee the coming irrelevance of the LP.

So why do I still support the LP? Well, there are a lot of reasons. I still have a lot of friends in the LP. It remains possible, though increasingly unlikely, that the LP will turn the corner and become a significant factor in the American political dialogue. I still feel a certain pride when I hear an articulate LP candidate explain the libertarian position on an issue or engage in debate with candidates from other parties. Harry Browne may not have participated in the nationally televised presidential debates, but here in Port Townsend, Elizabeth Meritt and John Bennett took part in a four-way debate just prior to the election, and they did me proud.

I should add that lately I've invested a lot less in the LP than I have in the past: in 2000, I invested only a few hundred dollars, and that in races where I thought the candidates might have a real impact.

You ask: isn't it time for libertarians to abandon the LP?

I can understand why so many people are leaving the LP, but I think the LP still has value. For one thing, while it is pretty certain that the LP will never enjoy significant electoral success, it may very well help spread libertarian ideas, though at this time it is far from evident that it is particularly effective in this regard. For another, the LP engages in some non-electoral activities. Its national office provides a steady stream of press releases, getting considerable publicity for libertarian views. On one occasion, it marshalled public opinion against a significant invasion of privacy. I refer to its campaign against the Federal Reserve's "Know Your Customer" regulations, defeated by an outpouring of unfavorable comment in early 1999.

I'd like to see the LP spend far less of its money on ballot access and electioneering. I think that Randal O'Toole's suggestion that libertarians learn from the experience of environmentalists and convert the LP to a broad-based political action group is a very good one. In its campaign against the Know Your Customer regulations, the LP has proven that this approach can work. And it publicizes libertarian ideas efficiently and effectively. But I doubt that O'Toole's propo-

sal will get far within the LP. Too many LP activists have too much invested in the old, failed strategy. And those frustrated by the party's failure are more inclined to let their membership lapse than to try to change it. O'Toole's proposed non-partisan activist organization is such a good idea that I believe someone will start one and it will attract considerable support among LPers and former LPers.

You ask: Why do people continue to support the LP?

Libertarians invested in the 2000 LP campaign, but by the start of its presidential campaign, it was pretty obvious that it would fail to achieve its ostensible goals. It planned to use exactly the same strategy as the failed 1996 campaign. The party's membership base was larger, but not enough larger to make a major difference; many of the new members had joined as the result of a slick direct mail campaign and had no real interest in becoming active. The major party race was the most competitive in the past half century, putting teeth into the why-waste-your-vote argument, and the campaign faced new competition from the Green Party. And with most money and effort going into the party's failing presidential campaign, it was obvious that there would be no breakthroughs lower on the ticket.

So why did libertarians support the campaign? The answer to this perplexing question, I think, is that most gave money to the campaign for other reasons than anticipation of electoral success. Some gave to the LP out of habit and friendship. Libertarians have abandoned the notion that the LP may have a real impact on American public life, but they continue to value it as a social institution.

Your other question was why I bother to cover the LP in the pages of *Liberty*. This is easier to explain. *Liberty* covers the LP because the LP is of interest to most of our readers, including those who are not directly involved in it and those who do not approve of it, and because I think it's important that an independent journal provide intelligent, independent reporting and analysis of it. *Reason* and *Ideas on Liberty* don't

If LP activists were involved in the GOP, they would be capturing nominations, helping to write the party platform, holding positions of influence within the party, and winning elections.

cover the LP because they have an editorial policy against covering politics. *Liberty*, of course, has no such policy.

But to return to the larger issues that your letter raised: I'd like to caution you against the temptation to think that there is a single, optimal strategy for advancing liberty. The libertarian movement is not a giant, centrally-managed organization, which can invest its financial resources and expend its labor in a coordinated way. It is tens of thousands of individualists, most of whom try to advance liberty in the way they think most interesting, most fun, or even most likely to succeed. My suspicion is that this is a strength, not a weakness. It insures a diversity of approaches — a good thing, since we really don't know what strategy is most effec-

tive — and enables constant innovation. It also means that liberty can advance on many fronts simultaneously. The LP has never been the only game in town.

I frequently hear from people who propose that one or another libertarian organization — most often the LP — ought to quit functioning so that its resources could be spent

The battle for liberty is a difficult one, fought on many fronts, and of much longer duration than any world war.

more effectively. Usually, these are young intellectuals, who propose that the resources freed up should be spent — surprise! — on subsidizing intellectual activity. Aside from the fact that it is far from obvious that subsidizing intellectuals is the most effective means of advancing liberty, I doubt that sending checks to libertarian foundations would be nearly as satisfying as political activism. It's a mistake to assume that if

the LP weren't competing for financial support, that support would go to other efforts.

The battle for liberty is a difficult one, fought on many fronts, and of much longer duration than any world war. In our struggle, we are all volunteers; we all choose the outfit we want to enlist in. And the libertarian movement is stronger for that fact. It is, after all, the movement for personal liberty, and if ends and means have anything in common, the freedom to make one's own choice of strategy should lead us closer to winning the fight.

Regards,
R. W. Bradford

P.S.: I don't want to let your characterization of LP members as mostly "people with a simplistic, even childish, understanding of liberty" pass without comment. The fact that not every LP member has a sophisticated understanding of philosophy and economics is a sign of its growth. In the early stage of a radical movement, it tends to attract people like you — intelligent people with a lot of intellectual curiosity — but as a movement grows, it attracts more diverse people, including people whose interests are different from your own.

Letters, from page 22

Born to Lose

Here's hoping you and others are thinking like this: Whether a turkey in every pot or an LP presidential candidate on every state ballot, both were admittedly scheduled to lose. So haven't we played the political turkey long enough by dividing our limited strength to be devoured on 50 different plates?

By now it should be obvious we are on a suicidal course. Oh sure, let's definitely continue our proud push for more local governmental offices. But for president? Come on! The media are all of referee, umpire, field judge, timer, linesman, and team owner. They cook our gizzard every time, way out in the parking lot.

D.M. Fowle
Pompano Beach, Fla.

Dukin' It Out Down South

Harry Browne could have been on the ballot in Arizona.

It was stupid for the national LP to dump the Arizona libertarian party (ALP) without cause and affiliate with a different Arizona libertarian party (ALP Inc.). ALP Inc. does not have ballot status in Arizona and could not put Harry Browne on the ballot.

At the ALP meeting in Flagstaff, Arizona, ALP voted to:

- 1) Place Harry Browne's name on

the ballot if the national LP reaffiliated with ALP.

- 2) Place Neil Smith's name on the ballot if the national LP chose to continue its affiliation with Tucson-based ALP Inc.

In reply, the national LP and ALP Inc. sued ALP and demanded that it put their candidate, Harry Browne, on the ALP ballot. This lawsuit angered ALP's governing board. In a meeting in Phoenix, it voted to make Neil Smith the Arizona presidential ballot and rescinded its offer to put Harry Browne on the ballot.

The national LP should place the blame of Harry Browne not being on the ballot in Arizona where it belongs: on the national LP directors. But, instead the national LP continues to blame the ALP.

Mike Ross
Tempe, Ariz.

Fighting the Good Fight

I expect the LP to rise above the current dismal totals: because we're right! But, how long it takes others to wake up to the truth remains to be seen. It might not even be in our lifetimes! To me, this is one reason the LP is so important. It keeps the idea of freedom alive.

The U.S.A. was basically the first and only libertarian country ever! And

it started just a little over 200 years ago. It's been mucked up since but the trend now of history is toward freedom even if it is at a pace that seems to us to be that of a snail. We are just at the beginning. So what if we haven't had success in 30 years? Thirty years is nothing. ABATE of Florida spent 30 years just getting the helmet law repealed. Once, after about 20 years, they got their bill through the state house and senate and then the governor vetoed it! But, they didn't give up and recently got their bill passed. We shouldn't give up either. We have to be patient and persistent and in the meantime be grateful that we have people to vote for.

I see the situation as somewhat analogous to my church. My guru, Paramahansa Yogananda, came to America in 1920 not knowing anyone here and without much money (he stayed at the "Y"). Nevertheless, undaunted, he established a church (self-realization fellowship). Today it's still a fringe religion but there's only about six countries in the world where we don't have members and membership is increasing all the time — 48 years after our guru's passing. It takes time for people to catch on, but my point is, if it's true, they will.

Let's press on with the LP.

Warren Woodward
Encinitas, Calif.

Spreading the Word

by Jeffrey Rigenbach

Even from the fringe, libertarians can play a important role in American politics.

R. W. Bradford suggests that Browne supporters of 1996 who switched their allegiance to Nader in 2000 are “superficial,” “don’t look very far into issues,” are “cranky,” and make choices “at random.” I suggest that a different interpretation is more likely. These people are single-issue voters, people for whom only one issue matters, and for whom that one issue is all-consuming. Such a voter might well have supported Browne in 1996 because of his position on that issue, then switched to Nader in 2000 because he took the same position, but was much better-known and more respected by the media and therefore stood a much better chance of actually getting the word out on that all-important single issue. Moreover, Nader actually had a shot at getting federal funding for his next run, with all that implies for getting the word out — but only if enough people voted for him.

To me, this sounds like a convincing rationale for certain Browne supporters of the 1996 campaign to switch to Nader this time around. Which Browne supporters? Those whose single issue is either America’s interventionist foreign policy or the War on Drugs.

I think the chief role the LP has to play in the libertarian movement is as an outreach and educational effort. It shouldn’t be judged on its ability to get votes. It can’t remain ideologically pure and get many votes; that’s the simple truth of the matter. It should be judged by the people it introduces to libertarianism; the numbers it brings in. And there’s no question those numbers have swollen since 1970. Contrary to Bill Bradford’s assertion, we are far from invisible. The word “libertarian” is now widely and regularly used in public discussions of policy issues. Tom Palmer of the Cato Institute recently devoted a front-page article in *Cato’s Policy Report* to the discussion of nearly a dozen recent books that mention or analyze (for good or ill) the libertarian perspective on American politics. Libertarianism is immensely more noticeable in the public prints and on the airwaves than it was 30 years ago — or even 20 years ago. And no small part of the credit for that must go to the LP, the institution that is typically the first contact a previously oblivious member of the general public has with “this movement of ours.”

The numbers of new libertarians brought in by the party

over the past three decades are not, to be sure, as large as we’d all like them to be. But a bit of realism is perhaps in order here. I find myself reminded of the remarks one of the grand old men of libertarianism, James J. Martin, made to a panel of *Reason* magazine interviewers back in 1975. He introduced the topic by referring to the American anarchist Voltairine de Cleyre (1866-1912).

Voltairine de Cleyre, [Martin told his interviewers] advanced the notion that at bottom, if you kept going down to the bottom, in an attempt to search out the reason for the existence of this or that individual attitude toward ethical, philosophical, and related questions, you got back down to a biological basis — what she called temperament — which was not capable of being understood or measured by any kind of rational approach; and that it was a genetic factor.

I mulled over that for a long, long time and am still doing so and am applying it everywhere I can. I can’t find any way to crack her case, and as a result I’ve adopted it. It explains my attitude of casual lack of interest in propaganda tactics, in the hopes of maximizing the existing number of libertarians. In this I’ve been influenced by additional forces, including the whole circle of Ernest Armand in France in the 1920s and 1930s who mulled over the problem themselves to a great extent, wondering why the ranks of libertarians increased so slowly, if at all. And it has dawned on me over the years that Voltairine de Cleyre explained why — that there’s a problem of the inability of the genetic process to produce libertarians in any larger volume than exists.

In looking over the scenery a little more closely I didn’t see any evidence that persuasion by way of literature, conversation, preaching, psychic intimidation, or any other known device, had maximized the number of such people, and in most cases in which it was reported by individuals that they had gone through some magical transformation from whatever they were to some libertarian position, all they had done was to find out what they really were. They had come to such conclusions as a result of self-exposure, so to speak — they

had revealed to themselves what they really were and had not gone through any conversion at all. They were psychically conducive to that attitude, as a matter of temperament. They had been inhibited from such awareness for a variety of reasons involving all kinds of things, ranging from religious or home pressures to various other things which prevented them from taking wing.

Now it would be pleasant for me to adopt a contradictory position and believe that by the expenditure of a lot of money and a great deal of exposure to literature and much eloquent talk we would suddenly convert all the totalitarians and authoritarians of the world into libertarians. And I would suggest that before that happens, as Krushchev said, you will probably hear shrimps whistle. The process of conversion is futile.

Therefore, I'm satisfied that the ranks of the libertarians will always be small, that they will probably be in about the same ratio to the total population as they are now, and I'm satisfied to contemplate that situation without developing suicidal tendencies or becoming morose, depressed, or anything else. It happens to be a fact of life and I'm ready to put up with that and I will change that view when I have some evidence for it. In my own lifetime I haven't seen one scrap of evidence to the contrary.

If Martin is right — and I, for one, believe he is — then the best we can reasonably hope for from an institution like the Libertarian Party is that it maximize the number of those who overcome whatever is inhibiting them from realizing that they are libertarians, by bringing them into the fold, showing them what there is to read, giving them the opportunity to understand and grasp the implications of the idea of individual freedom. For such an effort, Harry Browne is very close to the ideal libertarian candidate. He's intelligent, articulate, and altogether a superb salesman of our point of view. For those few who can be won over by such a pitch, he's close to the perfect pitchman. The postelection effort by the Browne campaign to bring down the existing federal campaign-finance

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laws and the presidential debate commission deserves the widest possible support. Such an action, should it succeed, would make it much easier to get our message out.

Another effort which libertarians ought to begin working on in earnest is the effort to rid us of the Electoral College. I was somewhat taken aback, while reading the January issue of *Liberty*, to see *Liberty* editors like Leland Yeager, Bruce Ramsey, David Boaz, and Stephen Cox coming to the defense of this indefensible institution. Why do I call it indefensible? Just listen to the loathsome James Q. Wilson, writing in *Slate* on Nov. 3 of last year:

The great benefit of the college is that, as it operates, it discourages the formation of large third parties. The winner-take-all system means that voters realize that to influence the outcome, they must vote for either the party in office or the major party out of office. Sometimes, of course, they vote for third parties, and on occasion some of these groups actually carry states. In 1968 George Wallace carried five states with 46

electoral votes. But generally the voters know — as Ralph Nader and Pat Buchanan will find out — that they favor one of the two major parties, each of which under the winner-take-all system tends to appeal to the centrist voter.

Suppose we abolished the college and chose presidents by direct popular vote. On at least 15 occasions since the popular vote began to be counted (around 1828), neither of the major party candidates got a majority. Clinton did not get it in either 1992 or 1996, and neither did Lincoln, Wilson, Truman, Kennedy, or Nixon (in 1968). In those cases, there would presumably be a runoff election to pick the winner.

Knowing this is a likely outcome, small parties would have a powerful incentive to run candidates, not because they thought they could win but because it would give them a chance to bargain with one of the two stronger candidates. We would have a replay on the national level of what now goes on in New York where 'parties,' some not much more than letterhead organizations with an attractive label, decide whether (if they are liberal) they will support the Democrat or (if they are conservative) they will back the Republican. France has this kind of multiparty system for its presidential choices.

Now think back and ask what this bargaining between also-rans and major candidates might produce. In order to attract these other votes in the runoff, I suspect that Lincoln, in order to become president, would have had to weaken his opposition to slavery, Wilson his regulatory impulse, and Truman his support for civil rights. (Strom Thurmond did so well in 1948 that he won 39 electoral votes.) Today, Bush might have to yield some policy views to Buchanan and Gore to Nader.

There is no end to the number of parties we might have that would stake a claim on the two major parties. Jesse Jackson, Louis Farrakhan, Jesse Ventura, and the National Rifle Association might all decide they want to get into the act.

The genius of our presidential election method is that it produces a clear winner. Minor parties may have some influence, but only by offering policy views that a major party later chooses to adopt. They cannot force the major party to do that as the price of winning.

Get rid of the Electoral College, pump up the appeals to single-issue voters who want a noninterventionist foreign policy or an end to the War on Drugs, and the LP might actually be able to influence policy, even if it is doomed never to become a majority party.

One final thing I think libertarians should do if they want to see the LP do better is stop pretending that Republicans are in some way preferable to Democrats. They are not. When David Boaz writes in the January issue of *Liberty*, for example, that "I can see why people would vote Republican. I can't see why people who work for a living or believe in our constitutional system would consider voting Democrat," what on earth is he thinking? What is the most flagrant abuse of federal power now before us? The War on Drugs. And who created this war? Republicans. A Republican named Richard Nixon took a long existent, but comparatively underfunded and de-emphasized Office of Narcotics and Dangerous Drugs, transformed it into the DEA, and multiplied its power and resources more than a thousandfold. Then, after a brief period of relative return to sanity on the issue during the administration of a Democrat, Jimmy Carter, another Republican, the loathsome Ronald Reagan, carried Nixon's insanity to even greater lengths. It was Reagan who gave us mandatory minimum sentences, asset forfeiture, federal prisons full of marijuana smokers while actual criminals walk the streets, and multibillion dollar annual budgets for the War on

Drugs. Perhaps if the unseeing Boaz were to encounter a working person who believed in our constitutional system and had friends or family members serving 30 years without possibility of parole for smoking a joint, while their children were reared in foster homes under state authority, he'd be able to understand why the very thought of the Republican Party is enough to make some people barf. I, for one, agree with those people. I can't understand how anybody who works for a living or believes in our constitutional system could even tolerate the thought of a political party that wants

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cops looking in people's windows and snooping through their homes and cars looking for evidence that they eat, drink, smoke, read, or watch something Republicans don't approve of — a party that wants to see a pregnant woman arrested for undergoing a medical procedure that is no one's business except her own and her physician's.

That's my assessment of the LP and its prospects: we need to be realistic about them and grasp that neither our party nor our movement will ever win over any more than a minority of Americans; we need to do what we can to make the party's message easier to get out and more influential among policy-makers, by removing the political obstacles that have been placed in our way — the federal election laws, the presidential debate commission, and the Electoral College. And we need to stop undermining our own efforts by fawning over slimeballs like Ronald Reagan and George W. Bush and thereby giving millions of people reason to believe that Libertarians are only slightly different from Republicans. □

Bradford responds: I wish Riggenbach were correct when he suggests that voters who cast casual votes for Browne in 1996 and Nader in 2000 are people highly motivated by one of the two issues that Browne held in common with Nader. I wish there were a large number of people out there are so "consumed" by foreign policy issues or the drug war that they rationally choose among all candidates to give their vote for liberty and decency the greatest impact. But I don't see any evidence for this hypothesis, and Riggenbach himself fails to offer any. In the absence of evidence to the contrary, I'll stand by my belief that, like the majority of American voters and the overwhelming majority of that subset of voters who eschew major party candidates, the thought processes of Browne-to-Nader vote-switchers are superficial and almost indifferent.

Riggenbach mystifies me when he claims that "Contrary to Bill Bradford's assertion, we [libertarians] are far from invisible. The word 'libertarian' is now widely and regularly used in public discussions of policy issues."

Try as I may, I cannot find where I claimed that libertarians are invisible or that the word "libertarian" is not used more widely now than in the past. Indeed, if my computer's

search engines are to be trusted, I didn't use the term "invisible" in any of the past four issues. The closest I came was in "Libertarian Party: The 2000 Election" (January), where I wrote:

We Libertarians have spent 29 years, tens of millions of dollars, and uncounted hours of hard work to get our message out, but most of our appeal is to people who have at best a vague notion of what we stand for. We've failed to engage the thinking of people who care about public issues. Most Americans have no idea who we are or what we stand for. Despite our best efforts, our vote total bobs around like a ping-pong ball in the crashing surf.

I suspect that Riggenbach construes what I said about the LP as a claim about libertarians in general. I certainly did not say that the word "libertarian" has failed to gain broader currency, or that libertarians have not gained influence. What I said was that, based on all available evidence, the Libertarian Party has failed to achieve its stated purpose, which is to influence American politics. In the absence of evidence to the contrary, I remain convinced that this is true.

But the most interesting thing Riggenbach wrote, I think, was this:

Libertarianism is immensely more noticeable in the public prints and on the airwaves than it was 30 years ago — or even 20 years ago. And no small part of the credit for that must go to the LP, the institution that is typically the first contact a previously oblivious member of the general public has with "this movement of ours."

Riggenbach is certainly correct in his first claim — that today libertarianism is more visible than it was 20 or 30 years ago — but his second claim is dubious. We do not know to what extent the LP, or any other group, or any individual, deserves credit for for libertarianism's greater visibility or for the growth of the movement.

Libertarians are almost obsessed with increasing the size and influence of their movement, yet they have shown almost no curiosity about how and why growth occurs. Few even

Libertarians are almost obsessed with increasing the size and influence of their movement, yet they have shown almost no curiosity about how and why growth occurs.

seem to be curious about whether the movement is growing at all. For those who are curious, the data suggest that it continues to have substantially fewer than 100,000 members, even if you define "libertarian" very broadly. And its growth rate during the past 13 years has averaged about 2.2% per year. There are a lot more of us than when Riggenbach and I were young libertarian radicals, but the movement is growing only slightly faster than America's population as a whole.

How do people become libertarians? Data exist that could provide a reasonably accurate answer. But they are owned by various libertarian institutions and organizations, who are reluctant to share. I have informally proposed to the heads of a number of libertarian organizations that relevant data be provided to an independent scholar who would guarantee to use it only in exploring this particular question. None of these people were particularly interested. □

Killahaole Day

by Kirby Wright

*Haoles don't seem to
belong in the tropics. Their
skin burns easily and the
sun makes them sweat.
They are the only ones who
seemed perfectly happy in
their school uniforms.
The nuns love them.*

Killahaole Day took place the last day of class on Oahu. If you were white and went to school, you took the risk of getting pummeled by a Hawaiian. The brother of one of my classmates had been arrested for shattering a *haole* boy's teeth with a lead pipe. If you were *hapa haole* like me, your fate was determined by how white you looked. I worked hard on my tan the last month of school. I'd heard rumors that some *hapa haoles* were dyeing their hair and eyebrows dark.

Being born and raised in the islands didn't make you Hawaiian. "Hawaiian" meant you were related to the natives who discovered Hawaii and had *kanaka maoli* running through your veins. Asian, Puerto Rican, and Portuguese boys weren't targeted because Hawaiians considered them descendants of the laborers brought in to work the white man's plantations. Killahaole Day was rooted in the fact that the sons of white missionaries had unseated Queen Lili'uokalani and declared Hawaii a republic. To Hawaiians, names such as Dole, Judd, and Bishop hung over Oahu like a curse. Buildings, streets, and companies named in their honor were reminders that the white man ruled. You couldn't blame Hawaiians for having *pakalaki* feelings. Frustrations over losing the *aina* were intensified by the stereotype that natives were lazy and uneducated so they were usually passed over for raises and promotions. A senior partner refused to make my father an associate upon discovering he had *kanaka maoli* blood.

I attended Star of the Sea Elementary, a Catholic school three miles northeast of Diamond Head. The nuns were mostly from New England and ruled with iron fists. But when the last bell of the school year sounded, they retreated to the safety of the convent. My Hawaiian classmates never attacked me because, besides looking local, I had written a play about pro wrestlers defeating a gang of vampires. "Pipeline Bloodsuckers" had made me a celebrity. My big brother Ben wasn't as fortunate — he wasn't a playwright, and his blond hair and green eyes made him stand out. And, to make matters worse, he'd earned a reputation as a con artist. Ben was a ringer when it came to the game of marbles. He would challenge me every day after school and, when I got tired of losing, he'd pull out a second marble and play himself. On the marble fields of Star of the Sea, Ben disguised his abilities in "for fun" games that he purposely lost. After bolstering the confidence of his mark, he'd pull

out his aquamarine cat's-eye and suggest a game of "kini keeps." This meant the marbles on the playing field were up for grabs and, if you lost, you couldn't exchange a favorite marble for a lesser one. Ben usually hit an opponent's marble by his third shot and it wasn't long before he'd won Ricky Kamani's prize *bumboola*. Then Ben threw a rock into a crowd on the first day of Lent — the rock bounced off Ricky's head. Ricky retaliated by organizing a gang that chased Ben into the foothills above the school.

I wasn't particularly fond of white kids even though my mother was Irish. *Haoles* didn't seem to belong in the tropics. Their skin burned easily and the sun made them sweat. They were the only ones who seemed perfectly happy in uniforms.

If you were hapa haole like me, your fate was determined by how white you looked. I worked hard on my tan the last month of school. I'd heard rumors that some hapa haoles were dying their hair and eyebrows dark.

The nuns loved them. *Haoles* rarely spoke the local creole and, if they did, it sounded fake. They never traded food from their lunch boxes and most of them thrived on peanut butter and jelly sandwiches, apples and corn chips. Parents didn't want their *haole* children making friends with Hawaiians. In kindergarten, I'd slammed my lunch box over Patrick Mulligan's head when he told me I had a wide nose. In later grades, I refused to let him borrow my Tom Swift books after he said *haoles* were the chosen race since they owned half the island.

In sixth grade, I witnessed the Killahaole Day fight between Ben and Ricky's gang. They'd trapped him on the gravel road behind the thrift shop. The shop was closed. At first it didn't seem serious — just a group of Catholic boys in white button-downs going through a ritual that would amount to nothing more than name calling and idle threats. Then a boy named Freitas and his friend Mits began pelting Ben with gravel. The sun was below the roof of the convent and long shadows stretched over the school. A big Hawaiian kid we all called "Da Destroya" walked out from behind the thrift shop. He'd been one of my wrestlers in "Pipeline Bloodsuckers" and had lifted a vampire over his head. Da Destroya was the biggest boy in school and, to make matters worse, he was wielding a Louisville Slugger. His sleeves were rolled over his biceps. The hems on his khaki pants were above the ankles. He'd been held back for punching a nun in the guts. He kept a weight bench in the bushes behind the shop and worked out during recess and lunch. I'd seen him hit three homers over the fence on All Saint's Day. He took a vicious cut at a bush of red hibiscus — a flower flew like a missile toward the convent. Geckos scrambled up the thrift shop wall. Then Da Destroya jammed the handle of the bat into Ben's belly and he doubled up against the wall.

I looked across the main field at the Church. It was a massive building with a steel cross embedded in its lava facade. It was where we all worshipped and I wondered how vio-

lence could erupt so close to its doors. It was as if the green-winged devil I'd seen in my illustrated Bible was winning the battle for souls. I put my books down and walked over the gravel road toward Ben. The stones crunched under my shoes. Mits turned around and gave me the stink eye; he was short and stocky and had bragged to Ben he had a yellow belt. Ben had told him yellow was the perfect color for him because the Japanese were cowards for bombing Pearl Harbor.

My brother's back was pressed to the thrift-shop wall. His shirt and pants were stained with dirt. Dots of blood freckled his arms where the gravel had cut him. There was a look of resignation on his face, the same look he gave my father when ordered to his room. Freitas continued to pelt him and Mits picked up another handful.

I ran over and stood in front of Ben while the stones rained down.

"Outa da way!" Freitas hollered.

Ben stuck his hands in his pockets, "Scram, Peanut."

"I'm not scrambling."

"Time out," Ricky said. He pulled out a wax bag of cinnamon toothpicks from his shirt pocket and placed one in the corner of his mouth. Da Destroya rested the bat on his shoulder and snatched two toothpicks. Freitas and Mits dropped their gravel and pulled toothpicks out of the bag.

I was sure Ricky would leave me alone because I was a grade below him. There was an unwritten law that Hawaiians in your class had exclusive rights on Killahaole Day. Besides, beating up a small fry like me was considered cowardly.

Ricky sucked his toothpick. "Yo' bruddah goin' die."

"Thou shalt not kill *haoles*," I said. For some reason, whenever religion entered my mind, I couldn't speak creole.

"Dat's no commandment," Freitas said. He blocked one of his nostrils with a finger and blew out a blast of snot. He was a fat boy whose mother baked *malasadas* for the coffee and

My Hawaiian classmates never attacked me because, besides looking local, I had written a play about pro wrestlers defeating a gang of vampires. "Pipeline Bloodsuckers" had made me a celebrity.

donut gatherings after Mass on Sundays.

I pointed at the Church. "Thou shalt not take false gods before me."

"Shut yo' fuckin' mout'," Ricky said.

"Yeah," said Mits, "befo' I geev ya karate chop."

"Let he who has not sinned cast the first stone," I continued.

Da Destroya took the bat off his shoulder and rested the fat end on the ground. He pulled the toothpicks out of his mouth. "Jesus said dat 'bout stones?"

"Sure," I answered, "in the New Testament."

"Fuck ya *haole* Jesus," Ricky said.

Da Destroya examined his toothpicks. Then he put them

back in his mouth and chewed. He lifted the bat and whacked the bush. Two flowers shattered and a mantis flew over the thrift shop. "My muddah pray Jesus," Da Destroya said, "ova at Queen's."

"She sick?" I asked.

He tossed the bat against the thrift shop wall and headed for the steps. He climbed slowly. When he reached the top step, he spit out the toothpicks and squatted. "Stay dyin' o' canca."

When Da Destroya lost his desire to clobber my brother, so did the rest of the gang. Mits and Freitas quit crowding in and Ricky paced back and forth over the gravel road. Ben scooted past the hibiscus bush and hurried for the cyclone fence. He zipped through the gate and I could see the tails of his shirt flapping behind him like surrender flags as he jogged the sidewalk of Kalaniani'ole Highway.

Ricky turned to me. "Tell ya bruddah we get 'im first t'ing next yea'."

"No can," I said.

"Whacha mean 'no can'?"

"Ben's going to Punahou," I said. "And so am I."

"Fuckin' haole school," Ricky said. "I get 'im afta Church." Freitas nodded. "Durin' donut an' coffee."

"Ben's an atheist," I said.

Ricky strolled over to the thrift shop, picked up the bat and turned to me. "Den ya take his place." "Yeah," Mits said, "geev 'im one good whippin'."

I tried running but Mits grabbed me, spun me around and got me in a full nelson. It was a move we'd learned watching "Honolulu All-Star Wrestling" on Saturdays. I tried kicking his shin. Mits punished me by squeezing as hard as he could. My arms dangled helplessly as he applied more and more pressure. It felt like my head was being stretched away from my body.

Freitas stabbed my forearm with his toothpick.

"Owie!" I said.

Ricky approached with the bat. "Ya goin' say moa dan 'owie'," he promised. He took a few practice swings and I could hear the air rush past the barrel.

"But I wrote that play," I said, "about vampires."

"I no care," Ricky said and faked a swing to my head.

"I no care eitha," Freitas chimed in.

"Leave 'im alone," Da Destroya said from the top step.

Ricky turned around. "Who says?"

Da Destroya was the biggest boy in school and, to make matters worse, he was wielding a Louisville Slugger. His sleeves were rolled over his biceps. The hems on his khaki pants were above the ankles. He'd been held back for punching a nun in the guts.

"I says."

Ricky held the barrel of the bat in both hands. He spit out his toothpick and glared at Da Destroya.

"What?" Da Destroya asked. "Ya like beef, ya fuckin' kanaka?"

Ricky lowered the bat. He nodded at Mits to let me go.

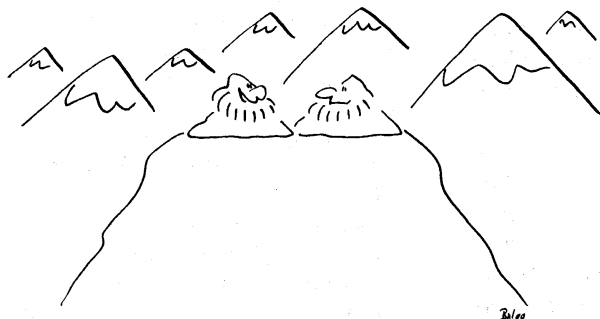
I hustled over and picked up Ben's books. His report card was lying in the dirt and I picked that up too. I stacked Ben's books on top of my own and ran on the gravel toward the fence. When I got halfway, I could see Ricky and his gang smoking on the steps of the thrift shop.

Da Destroya had left. He was moving through the checkerboard of light and shadow out on main field. His strides were long and determined.

He was heading for the Church. □

Rethinking the Mega-State, from page 25

going to be as if the tulip bubble had burst just as cheap silk flowers from Taiwan flooded the market. And this economic slump would have come crashing down at the very moment steam-powered tractors and mechanically driven gins and industrial farming were taking hold. All over the plantation South, blacks were going to be freed or abandoned as they were in the Caribbean, and for the same reason — because there was no profit in them. The whole institution of slavery



"Nothing against you, but my favorite incarnation was as Lady Godiva's horse."

would have been history.

And our own history wouldn't be burdened with the deaths of 600,000, the ruin of an entire region, and a hundred years of hatred heaped upon the freed men and their children unto the fifth generation. All the government had to do to make it so was nothing — just keep its armies home and let the South go its own way. Then, it would be the Confederacy, not Brazil, that became a beacon of racial grace and harmony.

Two nations, brothers in freedom, tracing their lineage back to the same Constitution, but with this difference: They would read the document in different ways. Surely Confederate judges would never have exalted the nation over the individual as thoroughly as our own courts have. Just as surely, they would never have interpreted away every single prerogative of the states, until the states, themselves, became no more than administrative boundaries. And judges in both countries could look to each other, and see interpretations, to illuminate their own decisions. And together, we would be a continent of experimentation with democracy and freedom. □

Reviews

The Virtue of Prosperity, by Dinesh D'Souza. Free Press, 2000, 284 pages.

Conservatives vs. Progress

Timothy Sandefur

Conservatism has always been hostile to free markets, and the ostensible demise of Marxism has merely brought that conflict to the surface. Free markets corrode the conservative's prime value, social stability; they are an acid eating away the structures which keep society frozen still. A stable society is the product of keeping every citizen in his place, of ensuring that we all have an unquestionable "sense of belonging." This is not the case in a free market society. There, a woman's place is not necessarily in the home. She has an equal right to try her skills and ideas in the market and to keep rewards she might earn. One could hardly invent a system better contrived to break traditional social structures.

So it's not surprising that those Goldwater conservatives who embraced free markets gradually discovered that they were really libertarians and eventually abandoned the Republican party. In the meantime, the Republicans have increasingly endorsed a platform which seeks to control social relations and revive what is called — with a perverse nostalgia — "community."

On the other side, contemporary

liberals are becoming increasingly hostile to technology. Liberalism began two centuries ago as an attempt to free individuals from their traditional social castes; it was pro-market in Jefferson's day. But American and British liberals eventually came to think of the market system as a reincarnation of the old caste system and began to propose redistribution of wealth to remedy the situation. It's a mistake to think that Marx sought to enslave the world; socialism began as an attempt to free individuals to maximize their personal potentialities. Today's liberalism has turned away even from that. Capitalism is seen as an enemy of the environment, or a tool for Western exploitation of more primitive (and therefore more noble) cultures. Thus, as D'Souza writes, "the most significant political development of our time is that these [right and left] critiques [of markets] are becoming one."

This is not news. Virginia Postrel said this two years ago in *The Future and Its Enemies*, which remains the best book in the debate which D'Souza's book chronicles. But Postrel's book was not the first to observe this convergence, either. Forty years ago in *The Two Cultures*, C. P. Snow argued that the academic world was divided

between the scientific culture and the literary culture. Firmly on the scientists' side, Snow laid most of the blame on the literary academics, who had not yet come to terms with the Industrial Revolution. Shrouded in romantic nostalgia for a preindustrial paradise which never actually existed, the literary culture blamed technology for eradicating the beauties of the old social order. Scientists, on the other hand, failed to appreciate the essential changes which they had worked, since they were largely uninterested in literary or artistic pursuits. Snow strikingly illustrated this difference by referring to a passage from D.H. Lawrence. Lawrence describes a scene in a maritime novel in which the captain flogs a sailor for disobeying orders, and then writes that "it is good for Sam to be flogged," because now "there is a new equilibrium," in which the sailor remembers his place — i.e., his subservience to the captain. "This reflection," Snow wrote, "is the exact opposite of that which would occur to anyone who had never held or expected to hold the right end of the whip . . . He is not romantic at all about the beauties of the master-and-man relation: that illusion is open only to those who have climbed one step up and are hanging by their fingernails."

Snow, of course, was talking about science, not just politics, but he sounded a distinctly capitalist note by saying:

Industrialization is the only hope of the poor . . . It is all very well for us, sitting pretty, to think that material standards of living don't matter all that much. It is very well for one, as a personal choice, to reject industrialization — do a modern Walden, if you like; and, if you go without much food, see most of your children die in infancy, despise the comforts of literacy, accept twenty years off your own life, then I respect you for the strength of your aesthetic revulsion. But I don't respect you in the slightest if, even passively, you try to impose the

same choice on others who are not free to choose. In fact, we know what their choice would be. For, with singular unanimity, in any country where they have had the chance, the poor have walked off the land into the factories as fast as the factories could take them.

What's the connection between D'Souza's book on politics and Snow's book on science? Science and commerce share this central attribute: they

do not respect authority. Just as the science of Galileo threatened to overturn the hierarchical society of his day, so the Internet threatens the hierarchies of our own day, which is precisely why authoritarians — whether in China, Singapore, or the Reno Justice Department — have tried to quash it. What makes D'Souza's book stand out is his forthright discussion of the science at the heart of this conflict.

D'Souza is not afraid to discuss the seemingly extreme possibilities presented, for example, by genetics. With the completion of the Human Genome Project, it is no longer unimaginable that man will someday be able to remake his physical structure and to

It is easy for Americans and Europeans to ban genetically altered foodstuffs, but it is not so easy in countries where people are desperate for any food they can get.

become something "post-human." We will soon be able to control the development of unborn children.

What Postrel calls "dynamists" and Snow calls "the scientific culture," D'Souza calls "The Party of Yeah." And what Postrel calls "stasists" and Snow calls "the literary culture," he dubs "The Party of Nah." One of the favorite catch phrases of the Party of Nah is "We shouldn't play God." Essentially this means that "artificiality" — human control over biological processes — is bad, and "nature" is good. Among conservatives this manifests itself in hostility to evolution education, fetal-tissue research, and cloning. Among liberals, it's genetically altered food and pesticides. Yet it is hard to convince the cancer patient, whose life hangs by the double thread of a DNA strand, that ignorance is somehow bliss. D'Souza quotes James Watson's eloquent retort: "We are talking about curing diseases and prolonging people's lives, and these morons are telling us that they have moral objections. I mean, what kind of ridiculous talk is that?" It's easy for Nah party members like Gertrude Himmelfarb to say that "In many ways we are a much poorer society than we used to be. There are other forms of poverty than economic poverty, you know." After all, she lives in a world where the human genome has been mapped; where a sugar cube can cure polio; where smallpox is extinct.

The attitude of the Party of Nah is also expressed in another of their catch phrases: "The premise that living crea-

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tures are nothing but mere atoms." "Mere atoms," and "nothing more"? Are the stars *mere* fusion? Or Beethoven's Ninth *mere* pressure waves? Or DNA *mere* atoms? A *mere* change in a nucleotide can turn DNA from a life-bringer to a death sentence, and our nasty old material wealth may soon allow us to undo such things, ensuring that future Stephen

The fact is that these pesky scientists and entrepreneurs have done far more to protect the sanctity of life than anyone in the Party of Nah.

Hawkings are freed from their wheelchairs.

This comes to mind when D'Souza ridicules Postrel for describing the Party of Nah as "pro-death." That is exactly what it is. This really is a life-or-death discussion. It is easy for Americans and Europeans to ban genetically altered foodstuffs, out of fear that the tiniest fraction of the population might be allergic. But it is not so easy for people who are less wealthy. In countries where people are desperate for any food they can get, priorities are a little different.

D'Souza paraphrases Jeremy Rifkin: "Cloning and genetic engineering are unnatural; they tamper with the natural order and with millions of years of evolutionary development . . . In the pursuit of a longer life and enhanced capacity for ourselves and for our children, we are extinguishing the sanctity of life." This reflection is the opposite of that which would occur to anyone who had never held the right end of nature's whip. The fact is that these pesky scientists and entrepreneurs, accused of robbing us of our cultural comfort, have done far more to protect — and to make us respect — the sanctity of life, than anyone in the Party of Nah.

Jacob Bronowski, one of Snow's colleagues, put it this way:

We today are scandalized that boys went on climbing in chimneys for nearly eighty years after the heart-rending poems which Blake wrote

about them around 1790. . . . But the boys had been climbing for a hundred years before Blake without a line of protest from Addison or Gay or Dr. Johnson. . . . So today in China and India and other countries with few machines, life is brutal and laborious, and sensibility is unknown. . . . It was the engine, it was the horsepower which created consideration for the horse; and the Industrial Revolution which created our sensibility.

As I write this, I am listening to a compact disc of Vladimir Feltsmann playing a melody by Liszt. Within a second I could reach a website where I might download the writings of John Milton or *The Federalist Papers*. It is hard to convince me that my life is poorer because I don't plow the same wheat fields that my great-grandfather worked, or feel the great family bond that comes from wood-burning stoves or polio season.

D'Souza goes further — sometimes as devil's advocate — even than the Nah-sayers, and suggests that we have done away with scarcity itself. What happens, he asks, when we have eliminated poverty or disease? Assuming for a moment that we have banished all material want, what does that require of us? What does a nation become when its primary health problem is obesity and not famine? Perhaps we become couch potatoes, like Nietzsche's "Last Man." Perhaps we become happy slaves like the Eloi of Wells' *Time Machine*. Perhaps we become explorers, philosophers, and scientists. Or perhaps we become "mere" parents, friends, and neighbors, pursuing "nothing more" than our own lives on our own terms. The decision is ours — which is precisely what troubles the Party of Nah.

Of course, we are very far from actually achieving this. One out of every five human beings is still a slave in communist China. Millions every year still die of famine, or of numerous diseases unheard of in America.

The book is not without flaws. For example, despite his attempt to be even-handed, he dismisses Ayn Rand's work because she was "a weird and unpleasant woman." But, by the end of this thought-provoking book, one cannot escape the conclusion that we have a great deal to fear from the Party of Nah. Humanity has repeatedly demonstrated its willingness to embrace cures worse than diseases. Spooked by our newfound power, many Americans today are eager to return to the allegedly "simpler" life of dogmatism and hierarchy — to go back to the days before Eve bit the apple. We see this trend in everything from the nostalgia for the 1950s to the popularity of Dr. Laura. But, as Jacob Bronowski wrote, knowledge:

is a responsibility for the integrity of what we are, primarily of what we are as ethical creatures. You cannot possibly maintain that informed integrity if you let other people run the world for you while you yourself continue to live out of a ragbag of morals that come from past beliefs . . . We are all afraid, for our confidence, for the future, for the world. That is the nature of the human imagination. Yet every man, every civilization, has gone forward because of its engagement with what it has set itself to do. The personal commitment of a man to his skill, the intellectual commitment and the emotional commitment working together as one, has made the ascent of man. □

In the Next Liberty

The Legacy of Bill Clinton

by R. W. Bradford, Stephen Cox, Sarah McCarthy, and William E. Merritt

The Dark Side of Israel

by Imad-ad-Dean Ahmad

Robbing Peter to Pay Mary

by Samuel Silver

Between the Alps and a Hard Place: Switzerland in World War II and the Rewriting of History, by Angelo M. Codevilla. Regnery, 2000, 248 pages.

An Island in an Ocean of Tyranny

Bruce Ramsey

In 1995, a campaign to vilify Switzerland began in the U.S. news media. Information had come out, it seemed, that the Swiss had cooperated with Nazi Germany during the war, manufactured armaments for sale to the Wehrmacht, and taken Nazi gold. Even worse, Swiss banks had taken the deposits of thousands of foreign Jews before the war, and refused to release the funds when the depositors or their surviving relatives came to collect the deposits after the war unless passbooks and other documents could be produced, knowing full well that most such documents had been destroyed or lost during the horrors of the war. The bourgeois Swiss, with their wristwatches and chocolate bars, had built their prosperity as accomplices to the Holocaust.

There was a demand for money to pay the heirs of the account holders and to compensate generally for the whole disgraceful episode. On Aug. 12, 1999, the two largest banks in Switzerland agreed to pay depositors and their heirs \$1.25 billion, and the campaign of vilification ended.

Had these two banks kept \$1.25 billion in stolen assets? No, writes Angelo M. Codevilla, professor of international relations at Boston University. Actually, there were several efforts to track down account holders over the years, the latest being a commission headed by Paul Volcker, former chairman of the Federal Reserve Board. The figure of \$1.25 billion bore no relation to money owed any victim.

Codevilla argues that the campaign

against Switzerland was a legal hold-up perpetrated on the banks by Edgar Bronfman, president of the World Jewish Congress and, not coincidentally, an individual whose family gives more money to the Democratic Party than any other. In Codevilla's account, Bronfman recruited high-priced attorneys, journalists, a State Department undersecretary, a U.S. senator, a federal judge in Brooklyn, and the comptroller of the New York City government, who threatened to contest the merger of the two Swiss banks unless they settled the lawsuit, in his campaign to shake down the Swiss banks. And because the two banks earned about \$4 billion in profit each year from New York, they were vulnerable to Bronfman's broad political attack.

This was not an official U.S. government demand, but, as Codevilla observes, "What the Clinton Administration did to Switzerland amounted to extending abroad the American interest-group process, by which government officials purchase the support of some citizens by renting to them the power to impose costs on others."

I once interviewed one of those high-priced lawyers, who explained to me the legal theory under which he sued the banks. He used a law passed in the 1700s called the Alien Tort Act, which had been pretty much forgotten for 200 years, and something else called customary international law, which evolved out of the Nuremberg trials. The theory behind his claim would justify many others, he said, including suing 150-year-old U.S. corporations for having benefited from slavery.

But this is the least interesting part of Codevilla's book. More fascinating was the tale of how the Swiss kept their freedom and independence during World War II. From 1940-45 Switzerland was surrounded by war-like states much larger than itself, yet it managed to get the Nazis to respect its territory.

How did the Swiss do it? The common answer is that Switzerland is in the Alps, and too much trouble to take over. The Nazis did decide not to invade Switzerland, Codevilla writes, but not just because of some mountains. It was the Swiss bloody-minded determination to hole up the army in those mountains, leaving three-quarters of the population undefended. The plan was to admit no civilians into the Alpine Redoubt. Moreover, the army was willing to fight to the death knowing that it had nowhere to retreat to and would inevitably lose, something which no other army in Europe was willing to do.

In 1940 the head of the Swiss army, Gen. Henri Guisan, held a meeting of the officer corps in the alpine meadow where the original three cantons created the Swiss Confederation 700

The reasons the Nazis did decide not to invade Switzerland is not just because of some mountains. It was the Swiss bloody-minded determination to hole up the army in those mountains, leaving three-quarters of the population undefended.

years earlier. On this sacred ground, the politically incorrect warrior told his officers their Swiss and Christian duty was to fight to the last man. Christians also took a hard line against Nazism, in the pulpits and with their own news service.

Swiss patriotism had to do with its identity as a political country rather than as an ethnic group, and with a tradition of independence that went back centuries. Far more than their European neighbors, the Swiss had been strongly influenced by classical liberalism. The Swiss government, however, had

increased its powers during World War I and the Depression, and had intervened in the economy to create employment. The resulting bureaucracy, the industrialists, and the labor unions were willing to accommodate the Nazi

Nor was Switzerland "enriched" by business with the Nazis. From 1940-43, the clearing deficit at the Reichsbank amounted to seven percent of Swiss GDP. Add to that the monopoly price the Germans put on coal, and twelve percent of Swiss output was simply taken by Germany.

new order to an alarming extent, much more so than the more traditional church and military. "The political will to resist Nazi Germany and assert the old Swiss decencies resided far more in ordinary people than in sophisticates," Codevilla writes.

Switzerland had a free press until 1940, when the government, under Nazi pressure, instituted censorship. It was relatively mild. Factual reporting was allowed, but it was forbidden to be overtly anti-German. Fortunately, Codevilla writes, the censor's job was given to the army, which soon decided that an anti-German press was its friend. Patriots noted that Czechoslovakia and Austria had muzzled their presses to please Germany and had been invaded anyway. The Swiss press still had to put up with finger-wagging officials telling it to be careful, and with occasional intrusions by German diplomats, but it managed to play a crucial role in boosting Swiss resistance to Nazism.

When France fell, Germany cut off shipments of coal to Switzerland just to make a point. The point was that Swiss industry was to furnish war goods and accept payment in Reichsmark credits. Essentially, this meant the Nazis were getting the war goods for free, while the Swiss government paid for German goods with gold-backed francs taxed from the Swiss people. In 1943, after the fall of Stalingrad, the Swiss insisted on

being paid in bars of gold. This, writes Codevilla, is "one of history's finest illustrations of the principle that the value of economic assets depends rather strictly on the balance of power."

The Swiss also produced war goods for the Allies, mainly watches and jewel bearings for aircraft navigation. After 1941, these were smuggled out through Axis territory. By 1943, twenty percent of Swiss exports were to Allies — and were paid for in gold deposited at the

Federal Reserve Bank of New York. But its use of that gold was subject to the control of Allied economic-warfare bureaucrats.

Switzerland was pressured by both sides and did business with both sides. This is what small neutral countries have always done when powerful neighbors go to war. To believe it could have taken a moral stand and refused to deal with Germany, Codevilla argues, is to be "ignorant of history and

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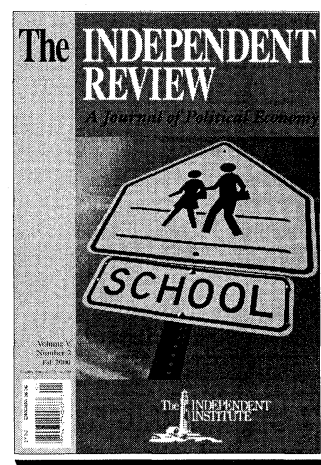
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of how nations deal with each other when they are serious."

Nor was Switzerland "enriched" by business with Nazis. From 1940-43, the clearing deficit at the Reichsbank amounted to seven percent of Swiss GDP. Add to that the monopoly price the Germans put on coal, and twelve percent of Swiss output was simply taken by Germany. But the countries Germany occupied typically were squeezed for three to four times that level, so it wasn't such a bad deal. Consider it Danegeld.

Swiss wages fell sharply during the war, thanks to the country's increased military spending, the need to pay extortion to Germany, and the lower productivity that resulted from Switzerland's being cut off from supplies and markets and having to grow its own food.

Codevilla concedes that Switzerland's behavior toward Jewish refugees was not always the most humane, but argues that it has to be evaluated in historical context. From 1933-38, German Jews were admitted freely, Switzerland being the only European country not to demand visas. Tens of thousands of Jews arrived in 1938, the year that the Nazis annexed Austria and staged the Kristallnacht. Border restrictions were soon imposed, but many Jews were admitted anyway. On August 13, 1942, Swiss borders were closed to all refugees on the grounds that the country was full; refugee organizations countered by threatening to go underground and help refugees illegally. The order was partially rescinded. By war's end, Switzerland held five times as many Jewish refugees as the United States, proportional to its population.

During the war, the Swiss people faced all kinds of individual moral choices. These are not the concerns of

this book, which focuses on the choices faced by the Swiss government and institutions. Switzerland compromised greatly on matters of money and trade, and much less on its political values. It maintained most of its liberty, though at the cost of universal male conscription. It is one thing to oppose conscription when you have an ocean between

you and the enemy, and you are bigger than he is; it is another when he is 30 times your size, and you are separated by nothing more than a small river.

The bottom line on the Swiss strategy is that it was tested in World War II and it worked. It kept the Swiss independent and largely free. And it kept them alive. □

Coming Out of the Woods: The Solitary Life of a Maverick Naturalist, by Wallace Kaufman. Perseus Publishing, 2000, 336 pages.

Up from Nature

Jane S. Shaw

Libertarians enjoy the outdoors as much as anyone else. They like to hike on forest trails, sleep under the stars, and view the landscape from a mountain summit. Where they differ from other nature lovers is that they don't write or talk about nature a lot. They don't apply much of their thinking power to exulting in the magnificence of the natural world or fretting over its fragility. (Have you ever seen an article in *Liberty* or *Reason* that expresses sheer wonder in the miracle of creation?) Libertarians, it seems, would rather read and write about human beings.

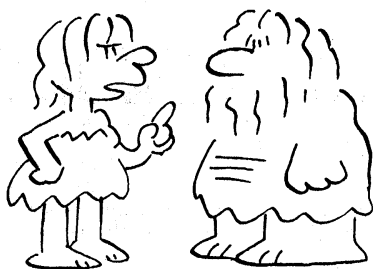
Coming Out of the Woods, a narrative by Wallace Kaufman about his 25 years living in a remote wooded glen somewhere outside Raleigh, N. C., is a book about nature that even libertarians can love. Yes, there is reflection about nature, about the "great circling of life," for example, as the fallen leaves of autumn become the nutrients for trees and leaves of the future. But Kaufman is equally interested in the people who are shaded by the leaves. With this interest, and an extensive knowledge of history and literature, Kaufman has composed a chronicle about the interaction of people and nature that is funny, poignant, and complex.

We meet Kaufman in 1968. He is

cooling himself off on a hot day by swimming in the creek near the site where he plans to build a house. He teaches English at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, but he is contemplating this pristine place as a way to find respite from encroaching civilization, for himself and for others who find the material world too cloying. Kaufman and another professor (who soon goes back north but remains a partner) buy 330 acres of wooded land. Kaufman begins to develop and subdivide the parcel of land, which eventually becomes known to nearby villagers as "Hippie Town."

First, Kaufman has to build a road at the entrance of the property. Appalled at the idea of demolishing trees, Kaufman opts for a narrow, trail-like road (something like Robert Frost's less-traveled road). He starts by using a small chain saw to cut a few trees. This turns out to be like "bludgeoning an elephant with chopsticks." So he moves up to a bigger saw. Even as he cuts away, he leaves many trees at the edge of his road, imagining that eventually they will form a graceful arch above the road. It turns out, however, that the state of North Carolina requires 50-60 foot wide roads, and he regretfully ends up hiring a man with a bulldozer.

The development progresses slowly. Even in the 1960s, not too many people wanted to stake a claim in an



"Now that we've learned to talk, you'd just better watch your language."

isolated patch of woods lacking water connections, electricity, or other basic provisions. Some who visit find themselves overwhelmed; a man and his son who stay at his house while Kaufman is away are so scared of wild animals that

By treating Thoreau as an equal and by disputing his famous claim that "in wilderness is the preservation of the world," Kaufman in effect challenges a guru of the environmental movement.

they sleep upstairs in the tiny loft with an axe at their bedside.

If it weren't for the back-to-nature romance reflected in the nation's first Earth Day, the project might have gone bankrupt, but gradually buyers arrive and "Hippie Town" survives. Kaufman keeps about a hundred acres for himself, where he designs and builds a house in which each window frames "a special view of the forest." He digs a well and plants a garden, and he and his daughter together explore their surroundings; hunting for mushrooms, watching birds, and smelling the "root beer smell of wild ginger."

A literary man, Wallace Kaufman enriches his narrative with allusions to writers such as Dante, Shakespeare, and Robert Frost, but above all Henry David Thoreau. Indeed, his story is designed to echo and in some ways parallel Walden.

Like Thoreau, Kaufman lives away from town (much farther than Thoreau did but, after all, Thoreau didn't have a Chevy pickup), designs and builds his own house, plants a garden, and picks up additional income with a marketable skill (Thoreau surveyed; Kaufman became a real estate appraiser after leaving the university). Unlike Thoreau, who sojourned on Ralph Waldo Emerson's property, Kaufman lives on his own land — for nearly 25 years, compared with Thoreau's two-years-plus. And while Thoreau was something of a misanthrope, Kaufman genuinely seems to like people.

Kaufman's book is edgy. By treating Thoreau as an equal and by disput-

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The Sociology of the Ayn Rand Cult by Murray N. Rothbard. Published in 1987, this essay is one of the most important scholarly works on Ayn Rand's inner circle. Rothbard was there, and what he offers is an unflinching, critical look at a cult that "promoted slavish dependence on the

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ing his famous claim that "in wildness is the preservation of the world," Kaufman in effect challenges a guru of the environmental movement. Further, as the name *Coming Out of the Woods* may imply, Kaufman's attitudes about the environment evolve over the years. Not surprisingly, *Coming Out* is not quite politically correct.

The political incorrectness is not a surprise. In 1994, Kaufman wrote *No Turning Back*, a policy-oriented book that begins by saying that it is something of a "kiss-and-tell book, since it is by an environmentalist about the environmental movement." Sensible and well-researched, *No Turning Back* undermines many shibboleths about preservation. It's more a policy book

than a passionate one.

Coming Out of the Woods is different. It is not about policy, although some policy implications may lurk about. Instead, it's a rich, personal story. The experiences it recounts and the sensibility it reflects provide credibility for Kaufman's policy observations in *No Turning Back*. Indeed, had he written *Coming Out of the Woods* first, his policy recommendations might resonate more forcefully with traditional environmentalists.

Whatever the implications for policy, *Coming Out of the Woods* is a highly readable story by someone who, like many of us, loves the natural world and who, unlike most of us, has spent much of his life deeply engaged with it. □

Booknotes

Venus and Freedom — You're a grown-up so, of course, you don't read books for juveniles, right? If that's your attitude, you are missing a great deal of fun. Take, for example, Robert Heinlein's *Between Planets*.

Between Planets was published in 1951, and I must have read it (for the first time) around that time. I have fond associations with the book because it was my introduction to science fiction and the ideas in the book started me on the path to libertarianism.

Don Harvey, the hero of the book, is the offspring of an Earth-born father and a Venus-born mother. His parents, scientists, are working on Mars. When politics starts to heat up and Venus becomes an uncooperative colony, his parents, concerned about his association with Venus, instruct him to leave his school on Earth and join them on Mars. And to say goodbye to "Uncle Dudley" before boarding his ship.

After a lavish dinner with his uncle, Don and "Uncle Dudley" are arrested, and Don learns that his uncle has died of "heart failure" while in police custody. The thought that pops into his mind is "a phrase he had heard in class from his biology teacher, 'In the end, all forms of death can be classed as heart failure.'"

Things continue to go wrong and Don winds up on a ship heading for Venus. What he doesn't know is that

he's being used as a courier, and that the object he's carrying contains the crucial information in Venus's struggle for freedom.

The book brilliantly portrays the tyranny that is implicit in war, and makes clear the necessity of resisting tyranny. It also includes some totally charming aliens, including "move-overs" and the dragons of Venus, particularly "Sir Isaac Newton."

Between Planets is still in print and is available in paperback for around \$7 — a good buy; after you read it, you can share it with your kids.

— Laura W. Haywood

They're their parties — I read Peter Robinson's *It's My Party: A Republican's Messy Love Affair with the GOP* a few days after I finished George Packer's *Blood of the Liberals*, and I couldn't help but be struck by the differences between them.

Both are highly personal essays about American partisan politics. Robinson is a former Reagan speech writer — he wrote Reagan's most inspired line, "Mr. Gorbachev, tear down this wall!" — who joyously describes his own personal odyssey, beginning when he discovered that he was a Republican. It's charming, witty, and wise. If you want to understand today's Republican Party, it's a very good place to begin. And you'll have a lot of fun reading it.

I read *Blood of the Liberals* after reading Bruce Ramsey's review of it in these pages. Ramsey focused mostly on the story of its author's grandfather, an old-style liberal congressman who fought the New Deal. Grampa's story is an interesting one all right, but there's a lot more to Packer's book.

It's an exceptionally well-crafted extended essay, but it's not nearly as much fun as *It's My Party*. Over and over again, I stopped to admire Packer's prose, the way one admires the execution of a particularly difficult passage in a musical performance. But it is pervaded by a gloominess that I suspect characterizes the thinking of the cultural elite of the Democratic Party.

Typical of this gloom is the enervating guilt that Packer suffers when he learns that one of his ancestors actually owned slaves. Now, slavery is a terrible thing and anyone who owned slaves ought to feel a terrible guilt, or at least regret, for having done so. But Packer manages to feel guilt for the fact that his great-grandfather owned slaves.

My great-grandfather fought in the Civil War, to end slavery and, I suppose, to free the slaves that belonged to Packer's great-grandfather. But I'm no more proud of this fact than I am ashamed that my father was an IRS agent. Moral worth, it seems to me, is the product of what you do with your own life, not what your ancestors did.

Political books sprout like weeds every four years, as Americans choose their president. The overwhelming majority of them are of no more interest to an intelligent person than the political philosophy of professional wrestlers.

Both these books rise above their brethren. Both are personal essay-memoirs that offer real insight into the development of American politics. Both are a pleasure to read. Offhand, I cannot think of any other books for which I can say the same.

— R. W. Bradford

A Daughter's Tale — *I Remain in Darkness* is a terse, taut memoir of a woman experiencing the slow death of her mother from Alzheimer's Disease. Annie Ernaux, a French novelist, is acclaimed both in her native country and in the United States, where several of her books have been *New York Times* Notable Selections. *I Remain in Darkness*

is non-fiction, however, and is imbued with the disquiet one often feels when reading a book that was unintentionally written: how much artifice is present, even when the author never intended these fragments to be published? In other words, is a fiction writer ever "off," or does she always adapt her experiences from life to art? Ernaux is honest about the fact that she jotted down these notes "in the turmoil of [her] emotions." She originally used them as the basis for a memoir about her mother, which she destroyed. *I Remain in Darkness* is Ernaux's own story, entirely unedited. The memoir therefore proves that a writer can express herself during times of severe emotional upheaval without sacrificing the precision of language which makes her a great novelist.

More than two years slip past; it is as though we are watching someone's life through the windows of a swiftly moving train. The author-narrator conducts love affairs, goes into the hospital for surgery, receives a major literary award; all the while, her mother is deteriorating, mentally and physically. (The book's title is the mother's own description of her decline.) Ernaux's descriptions, poignant and brief notices of how her mother's "lips are becoming obscenely thin," are interspersed with immediate realizations of death, gaping as though she can hardly swallow hard enough to accept them.

Ernaux specifies in her foreword that this book should in no way be taken as an "objective chronicle of a patient's stay in the long-term geriatric ward," but at the same time, it explores many universal aspects of decline and death.

— Tracey S. Rosenberg

¡Viva Che! — Whether you love or hate the man known to the world as "Che," John Lee Anderson's *Che Guevara: A Revolutionary Life* is a must read for anybody interested in the Cuban Revolution. In this lengthy biography, Anderson combines extensive research with personal interviews of people who knew Che and excerpts from Che's personal diary to present the reader with an detailed account of the life of Che, from the time of his conception, three months before his parents' marriage, to the time of his death, at the hands of the CIA in a Bolivian village schoolhouse.

Anderson begins the story with

Che's childhood in Argentina, where he was raised by parents described as "libertarian" in their beliefs and "bohemian" in their way of life. Che spent his early years enjoying boyish adventures and performing poorly in school. Driven by a desire to "find something that could be placed at the disposition of humanity," he attended medical school and became Dr. Guevara at the age of 24.

Immediately after receiving his medical degree, Che left to explore the world beyond the Argentine borders. It was in the course of his wanderings through Latin America that Che developed his political philosophy. After witnessing the difficulties of peasant life and the havoc wreaked by U.S.-supported dictators in those countries, and discovering the works of Karl Marx, Che developed a passion for communism and a deep-seated hatred for "yankee imperialism." Che was already a dedicated communist in 1955, when he met Fidel Castro, who was

exiled in Mexico. He immediately joined Castro's small revolutionary group and spent the next four years helping plan, train for, and carry out the Cuban revolution as one of Fidel Castro's top men.

Anderson portrays Che as a patriotic hero, worthy of applause one moment; a ruthless executioner, worthy only of disdain, the next. The one constant, however, is Che's devotion to revolutionary communism. From his successful adventures in Cuba, to a failed insurgency attempt in the Congo, to his death in the jungles of Bolivia, Che Guevara was a man who lived, fought, and died for his beliefs.

Anderson left me the feeling that I'd read a completely candid account of Che's life and personality. He also left me with a sense of awe for the man who fought so valiantly for the principles in which he believed; and a feeling that Che Guevara was a man to be admired.

— Shannon Seibert

Notes on Contributors

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Kirby Wright is a recipient of the Academy of American Poets Award and the Browning Society Award for Dramatic Monologue.

Terra Incognita

Colorado

Police take interest in the public's reading habits, from a report in the *Denver Post*:

A Denver judge has given police permission to search records at the Tattered Cover bookstore for evidence in a drug manufacturing case. Police hope that the purchase records of several books will lead to the discovery of the leader of several people arrested. Said one official, "If it only takes one or two records from a bookstore to help us eliminate drugs on the street, then so be it."

Sultanovici, Bosnia

Military accomplishment from the New Army, reported by *The Colorado Springs Gazette*:

Peacekeepers have recently stopped the rampant illegal dumping in the hamlet of Sultanovici. The dumping, which buried two houses, stopped after the peacekeepers persuaded city officials to find another site. Said one captain: "What we did there, the accomplishments, will never die."

Quebec, Canada

Working to protect cultural integrity as reported by *El Nuevo Herald*:

The sale of the popular intergalactic doll "Ooglie" has been banned in Quebec for violating the provincial law that requires that French be the principle language in the province.

Cuba

A new and improved version of the struggle of the downtrodden worker, reported by *EFE, Cubanet*:

More than 150 women struggled to get into a store that had a 50% discount on \$1 blouses. The riot included "pushes, cries, threats and curses."

New York

Progress in the war on small mammals, reported by the *New York Daily News*:

New York City's Rat Czar, Joseph Lhota, has proclaimed that people should pay more attention to "how they sort their trash."

France

A new method of battling the forces of sloth, reported by *El Nuevo Herald*:

To alleviate a shortage of burial plots, the French Riviera town of Le Levandou has passed a law forbidding anyone to die within the city without owning a plot in the cemetery.

Singapore

Good news for tourists, from the nation that outlawed possession of chewing gum, as reported by *Hemispheres*:

"Strict government policies may elicit occasional complaints from locals, but they make Singapore ideal for tourists."

Germany

Another technological development from the unified Germany, from a catalog for *Tyrol International*:

Hermann, the famous toy company, has created a limited edition of 1,000 of the "Moses Bear." The bear "wears a cream mantel and striped cloak" and carries a staff and tablets. The bear, which features the famous Hermann "growl" has name and edition number embroidered on its paw.

Toledo, Ohio

The neighborly spirit lives in northern Ohio, as reported by *The Toledo Blade*:

A man who bought a house at a sheriff's auction discovered a skeleton in the living room. The body had not been discovered since neighbors thought the owner had moved away to convalesce, so they kept the garden neat for him. Said one neighbor: "... it has been really quiet over there lately."

Texas

Curious lawsuit in the Lone Star State, reported by *BBC News*:

A prisoner filed a lawsuit for \$500,000 for becoming "very mentally hurt and angered" when Penthouse's Christmas centerfold picture of Paula Jones was "not sufficiently revealing."

Colorado

Enlightened regulation of the psychotherapeutic profession, as reported by the *Canyon Courier*:

Officials have discovered that one of the therapists involved in a "rebirthing" session was not properly authorized. "In fact, she was not even registered with the state, which is a requirement for unlicensed psychotherapists in Colorado."

Brazil

Interesting development in the fiscal policy of Latin America's largest republic, as reported by *The Wall St Journal*:

The Central Bank of Brazil is studying a plan to make it easier for poor women to borrow money for breast enlargements.

Redmond, Washington

Intriguing methods of spiritual enlightenment in the home of Microsoft, as reported by the *Milwaukee Journal Sentinel*:

A woman is suing a well-known Buddhist monk whom she says tricked her into sexual intercourse, which he called a "twin body blessing."

Santa Clara, California

New methods of punishment in the criminal justice system as reported by *Prison Legal News*:

County officials hired a priest to rid the local jail of evil spirits which were summoned by 29 previous prisoners with a Ouija board and which led to a rash of demonic possessions.

Special thanks to Russell Garrard, Phillip Minter, Martin Solomon and J.S.F. for contributions to *Terra Incognita*.

(Readers are invited to forward news clippings or other items for publication in *Terra Incognita*, or e-mail to terraincognita@libertysoft.com.)

Your Vote Doesn't Count

by Sheldon Richman



I have followed the presidential election returns pretty closely, and for the life of me, I cannot find a single state where George W. Bush and Al Gore were tied or where the margin victory was one vote.

This is important because everyone from President Clinton to the most obscure news anchorperson has repeated incessantly that this election proves once and for all that "every vote counts." In particular, they had Florida in mind.

My question is this: how does a 537-vote margin in Florida demonstrate that every vote counts? I know that the government's schools aren't terribly good at teaching our children arithmetic, but this is a little absurd. Bush won Florida by 537 votes. Should someone who would have voted for

Gore but stayed home kick himself for letting Bush win? The answer is yes — *if he could have cast 538 votes*. But it's one man *one* vote, remember? Had this person exercised his "civic duty" and voted, Bush's margin would have been 536. Conclusion: that person's vote did not count, if by "count" we mean "determine the outcome." The same is true for every other person's vote. We can say that in Florida, every block of 537 votes counted, but that is far different from saying *each* vote counted.

So enough of this "every vote counts" nonsense. Aggregate votes count. If millions of Bush's or Gore's voters had stayed home, the outcome might have been different. But no one controls millions of votes. When we wake up in the morning — election day is no exception — we each ask ourselves, "What shall I do today?" Almost automatically we separate our possible choices into two categories: those that in our best judgment have a chance of bringing about a desired result and those that do not. We routinely discard those in the second category. If I have to go to work that day, I do not flap my arms

or twitch my nose to get there. I also do not make a wish that I will find a million dollars in my wallet, obviating the need for me to go to work at all. Why? Because I know it will have no effect on the desired outcome.

On election day, voting is one of the actions I can take. But I submit that course of conduct to the same test: will it contribute to bringing about a desired outcome? That raises the question, what is the desired outcome? If it is to feel good about giving my sanction to a candidate I admire and to join in the community of like-minded citizens, then voting will bring that about. Thus that may be a good reason to vote.

But if the desired outcome is the election of a particular person, then my voting is most unlikely to bring that about. Indeed, I have a better chance of being hit by lightning while driving to the polls than of breaking a tie in the election. In other words, determining the winner is a bad reason to vote.

When I argue this to people, they invariably say, "What if everyone thought that way?" Obviously, my decision not to vote is based on what I think other people will do.

That's true of many actions. When a young person announces that he wishes to become a doctor, do we say, "What if everyone thought that way? If everyone becomes a doctor, there will be no businessmen or lawyers or shopkeepers." If I thought no one was going to vote on election day, I might vote, because in that case my vote would be decisive. My reason for not voting is precisely that by any rational estimate, my vote will *not* be decisive.

Finally, what about the plea that we should vote because it is our most precious right, which people have died for? First, voting is not the most precious right. The most precious rights are life, liberty, and property. If America's servicemen died for anything, it was the right to live their lives and raise their families as they see fit. As any number of examples demonstrate, the right to vote is no guarantee of that.

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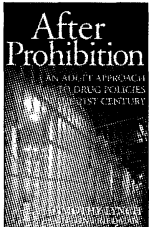
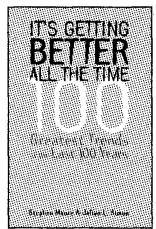
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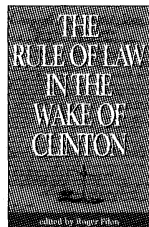
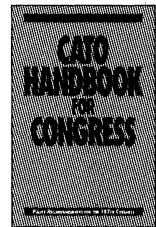


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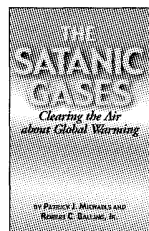
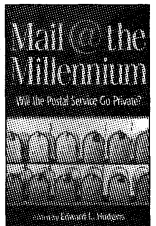


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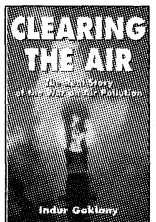


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